

S E R M O N S

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS;

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF

THE PRINCIPLES OF

PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,

THEIR MODE OF WORSHIP,

A N D

FORMS OF PUBLIC PRAYER, BAPTISM,

AND THE LORD'S SUPPER.

By H. KIRKPATRICK. *K*

WARRINGTON,

Printed by W. EYRES, for J. JOHNSON, N^o. 72, St. Paul's
Church-Yard, LONDON.

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VARIOUS SUBJECTS

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THOUGH the following sheets are written by a Dissenter, I trust no one will think this circumstance a sufficient reason, for refusing them a candid perusal. They contain at the same time the sentiments of a Protestant, and a Christian; free from all bigotted attachment to any party, or fiery zeal to any denomination of Christians. I dissent from the Established Church, because I think in many instances, her doctrine, discipline, and spirit are unfavourable to the cause of virtue, and to the honour and success of the Christian religion: and that the principles and mode of worship amongst the Dissenters I have described, are much more rational, and more agreeable to the doctrine of the New Testament. I am a Non-conformist, I hope, not from education or prejudice, but from conviction: nor am I ashamed of any opprobrious

A 2 name,

H. K.

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INTRODUC-

INTRODUCTION.

AN ACCOUNT OF

DISSENTERS, &c.

IT was my original intention, and proposal, to have prefixed to these Sermons, an account only of the late congregation of Protestant Non-conformists, in Liverpool, called Octagonians: but finding a total ignorance of the principles of Dissenters in general, almost universally prevailing; and their tenets, mode of worship, reasons for dissenting, and the particulars

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wherein

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wherein they differ from the established church misunderstood or unknown; I was induced to enlarge my plan, and give a fuller account.

By the word Dissenter, in general, is meant, every one who does not conform to the established religion of this country, except Roman Catholics. But I mean not to take in every description of men of this sort; there are many I am much a stranger to, and others perhaps of whom I am totally ignorant. By the word Dissenter, I would therefore be understood to mean the persons commonly called Presbyterians.

These differ not from the church in any point of doctrinal faith, more than its own members differ one from another.

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ther. There are many Non-conformists, who believe all the articles as expressed in the book of Common Prayer, except those relating to church power and government.

Praying without a printed, or composed form of prayer, is not a distinguishing difference betwixt a Churchman, and a Dissenter. Some of the latter, prefer composed forms to those delivered from memory, or which are commonly called extempore. Nor are the vestments,* and forms made use of as standing, and kneeling, material objections to the Established Church, with the persons I am describing.

The grand distinguishing difference betwixt a Churchman and a Presbyte-

* The gown and cassock are worn by many Dissenting Ministers.

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rian, is this; the latter claims a sole right of judging for himself, in matters of religion; he acknowledges Jesus Christ as the sole head of the church; and asserts that no man, or body of men upon earth, have any right to prescribe forms of worship, or articles of faith, for his observance and belief: that this is contrary to the spirit of the Christian Religion, and to the unalienable rights of conscience, and tends to destroy genuine piety, and rational devotion.

A Dissenter, is therefore no more than simply this: viz. a Christian, and a Protestant, without any one point of doctrinal faith peculiar to him as such, claiming to himself a right of private judgment, and the interpretation of those

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those scriptures, which contain the Christian religion; and denying the authority of the civil magistrate in these matters, over the judgment and consciences of men. On the contrary, members of the Establishment entirely give up this principle, and profess it to be their duty to receive those articles of faith, and attend that mode of public worship, which has been formed by others, and prescribed by law, though they may differ from their own private creed: or they allow ("Article XX.) "*that the church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith, &c.*" A dissent from this article, I consider as the grand and distinguishing difference, betwixt Non-conformists, and the members of the Established Church.

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As to the order and method of public worship amongst Dissenters: the service commonly begins with a short prayer,* after which it is customary to read a portion out of the Old, and another out of the New Testament, after that to sing a psalm; a longer prayer follows this, containing adoration of the divine perfections, confession of sin, petition for the pardon of it, &c. with intercessions for our king and queen, and all the royal family; for the parliament, judges, magistrates, and clergy of all degrees, for all who are afflicted, or distressed, and stand in need of the compassion and

* In some congregations the service begins with singing, and after that the short prayer, &c. and frequently a psalm is sung after sermon, before the last prayer.

assistance

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assistance of their fellow-creatures, &c. The sermon follows this, and the service concludes with a short prayer, which generally has some reference to the discourse that hath been delivered.* The Lord's prayer generally concludes this or the preceding form of devotion.

I shall now take notice of some other matters wherein the Dissenters differ from the Established Church, viz.† baptism, confirmation, the Lord's supper, and burial of the dead.

In the ordinance of baptism, the parents of the infant are looked upon, by us, as the only proper persons to request this ceremony, and to them every exhortation is directed concerning the care, instruction, and education of the child.

* See the prayers at the end of the sermons.

† See the form for baptism of infants.

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For myself, I honestly declare, I cannot but look upon this ordinance, when performed according to the church service, as having in it somewhat ludicrous. What manifest absurdity is there in the questions proposed to the infant, and the answers it is supposed to give! *Dost thou believe in God, &c. — Dost thou renounce the devil, &c. — Wilt thou be baptized, &c. — Wilt thou keep obediently, &c. —* Of what possible advantage can the proposal of these questions be? Can an answer in the affirmative to these queries, by godfathers and godmothers be binding upon the child? If so, an infant may be laid under obligations to embrace at mature age, any religious opinions which other persons may chuse for it. And the Roman Catholic when come to age, is as much bound

bound by the promises of his sponsors to perform what they engaged for him, as the Protestant. Can this part of the ceremony have any other effect, than to cause this institution to be ridiculed by the enemies of Christianity? The words of the Author of the Dissenting Gentleman's Letters to White, in a pamphlet, entitled, *A calm and plain Answer to the Enquiry, Why are you a Dissenter from the Church of England?* are so forcible and plain, that I shall take the liberty of quoting them.

“ Religion, beyond all doubt, is,
 “ and can be, no other than a personal
 “ thing. Christianity knows nothing
 “ of believing, repenting, and vowing
 “ by proxy; any more than of being
 “ saved and damned by proxy. The
 “ whole

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“ whole affair, as it stands manifestly
“ in the article and office of the
“ Church, is this : the child is declared
“ to be BORN IN ORIGINAL SIN, AND
“ IN THE WRATH OF GOD ; AND
“ DESERVES TO BE DAMNED.* God
“ is ANGRY with the *infant* even to
“ *wrath*, though it hath done nothing
“ to offend him, and it is in danger,
“ under this wrath, of sinking into
“ EVERLASTING DAMNATION. How
“ then is it to be delivered from this
“ dreadful situation ? Why without
“ repentance and faith, there is no
“ remission of sins, nor reconciliation
“ to God : but the child being unable
“ to repent, and believe, and vow for
“ itself, the parent procures two or
“ three sponsors to repent, and believe,

* See Office of Private Baptism and Art. IX.

“ and

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“ and vow in its stead : and so the
“ child having thus vowed, and be-
“ lieved, by proxy before God, the
“ eternal Majesty of Heaven lays by
“ his wrath ; his anger is appeased ; the
“ child’s sins are forgiven ; he is taken
“ into the divine family, and is become
“ an heir to eternal life.”

Now I should be glad to be informed
what is the beneficial tendency, or even
the meaning, of all this : how is an infant
TO BE RELEASED FROM HIS SINS,
who has never committed, nor is ca-
pable of committing any ? Or how
is he to be sanctified WITH THE HOLY
GHOST ? Or where is it promised in
the Gospel, that these things shall be
granted, for whomsoever they are asked ;
particularly THE KINGDOM OF GOD
AND

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AND EVERLASTING LIFE? These certainly are absurdities too great to be defended.

The sign of the cross at baptism is never used amongst Dissenters; and for this reason, because there is no command for, nor example of this usage in the New Testament; and positive ordinances, we think, are literally to be performed as directed. We know that strict injunctions were given by God in the publication of the Jewish religion,* that no one should add to, any more than detract from it; which, though

** Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. Deut. iv. 2. Whatsoever things I command you, observe to do it, thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it. Deut. xii. 32.*

it

INTRODUCTION. xiii

it was of divine establishment, was but imperfect in comparison with the Christian Dispensation. And if this was so strictly to be guarded against, in the Jewish religion, can there be any reason urged, why it should not be as strictly attended to in the Christian; which has so great a superiority over that, and all that ever was called religion in the world?

Besides if human invention was allowed to add to the institutions of Christianity, what numerous ridiculous rites, and whimsical superstitions, might it adopt! Anointing the baptized with oil, giving them milk and honey, with other foolish and trifling ceremonies, were at one time practised in the Christian church; and they have equal authority

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authority to support their continued usage, as the ceremony we have been speaking of.

Confirmation is never practised amongst Dissenters. This is undoubtedly of human invention; and not only so, but seems calculated to have a very bad influence upon the minds of men; to lull them into a fatal security, and make them careless of vital religion. It tends to give men wrong notions of the terms of divine acceptance, and substitutes something in the room of that holiness of heart and life, without which no man shall see the Lord: for if a person can say the short catechism, the bishop declares, that Almighty God hath vouchsafed to regenerate him by water, and the Holy

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Holy Ghost, and hath granted him the forgiveness of all his sins; and by the sign of laying his hand upon his head, assures him of God's favour and gracious goodness towards him.

The laying on of hands on the new converts at Samaria, by the apostles Peter and John, cannot be used as an argument for this ceremony; for that was used in conferring upon them the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, which no bishop will now pretend to bestow.

And Judas and Silas confirming the brethren at Antioch (Acts xv.) has evidently no reference to the custom of confirmation as now practised. By attending to the whole of the account it plainly appears, this was only to confirm

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confirm and settle their minds, concerning some religious disputes they had about the obligations of the Mosaic law, from the observance of which the apostles declared they were set free.

The celebration of the Lord's supper,* is the next thing I shall take notice of, wherein Non-conformists differ, from the members of our Established Church.

I cannot but think this ordinance as performed in the Church of England, favours too strongly of the Popish doctrine of transubstantiation, for any Protestant to receive it with pleasure and satisfaction.

* For the manner of celebrating this institution amongst the Presbyterians, see the Form at the end.

The

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The prayer used at the celebration of this institution is, "Grant us, gracious Lord, so to eat of the *flesh of thy dear son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body; and our souls washed through his most precious blood*—and farther, "*that we may be made partakers of his most blessed body and blood.*" The XXVIII Article, indeed, declares against transubstantiation, but the expressions in the service very strongly favour it.

Besides the reception of the elements of bread and wine is called an *holy mystery*. Now, what can this mean, but transubstantiation or consubstantiation? For what mystery is there in eating bread, and drinking wine, in commemoration of the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ?

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The church catechism teaches, that
 “ *the body and blood of Christ are verily*
 “ *and indeed taken and received by the*
 “ *faithful in the Lord's supper.*” These
 expressions seem to me necessarily to
 imply the body of our Lord being
 present, and taken into our bodies,
 and that it has some mysterious in-
 fluence upon us. It is true our Savi-
 our says, *this is my body*, but when he
 used these words to his disciples, his
 own presence prevented their being un-
 derstood in that literal sense they have
 since been explained to mean. And as
 men have been so foolish as to believe,
 that they verily did partake of Christ's
 body and blood at this ordinance, ought
 not this at least to have been more cau-
 tiously expressed?

The

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The whole of this service, if it does not directly maintain the doctrine of transubstantiation, (though I see no other construction that can be put upon the words of it) yet I am sure it is excellently calculated to prepare the minds of men to embrace it. Accordingly Helyn and Cambden both tell us, that it was so far from being disagreeable to the Romish Church, that the Pope was willing to give it his authority; and that this offer was made to Queen Elizabeth, if she would acknowledge the primacy of the popish See.

The burial of the dead, as performed by the established church, the dissenters consider as very objectionable.

The clergyman pronounces, over every man he buries, the following

c 2

words:

words: *That it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy, to take to himself the soul of their dear brother; they therefore commit his body to the ground, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life; they give God hearty thanks, that it hath pleased him to deliver this their brother out of the miseries of this sinful world,—and pray God that when themselves shall depart out of this life they may rest in Christ, as their hope is this their brother doth.*

Now is it not contrary to the doctrine of christianity to declare, that the souls of the most wicked and profligate of mankind, are taken to *Almighty God of his great mercy*, and that they rest in *Christ*?

Farther,

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Farther, what an evident inconsistency is there in declaring that man to be taken to God in his great mercy, and that they therefore commit his body to the ground in sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life, whom perhaps a little before by reading the Athanasian Creed, they had pronounced IMPOSSIBLE *to be saved*, and sent without doubt to everlasting damnation.

The burial service for the dead amongst Dissenters, consists of reading those portions of Scripture appointed in the common Prayer Book for this purpose, with a short discourse at the grave on the frailty and mortality of human nature. The ceremony of throwing dust into the grave is also

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generally made use of amongst us ; and the service concludes with a short prayer adapted to the occasion.

Dissenters also differ from the established Church, in the ceremony of ordaining ministers to perform the offices of public worship.

At the ordination of a minister amongst Dissenters, divine service is conducted as is usual on all other days of public worship ; but is rather longer, on account of some additions suited to the occasion. A discourse upon ordination is delivered, explaining its design and use ; after which, the minister to be ordained is desired publicly to give his sentiments concerning natural and revealed religion, the Protestant profession
in

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in general, and that of the Protestant Dissenters in particular, with his views in entering upon the ministry amongst the people of the last mentioned persuasion. But no subscription is required to any particular creeds. Then follow, a Sermon, usually addressed to the people upon the subject of their duty; and a Prayer, particularly adapted to the occasion. Lastly, a Charge is delivered to the candidate for ordination, explaining and enforcing the duty of the ministerial function, and recommending to him that serious and regular behaviour, which alone can give dignity to his office, make him useful in the station in which he is fixed, and be conducive to his own happiness in life. Imposition of hands has indeed been generally adopted on

xxiv. INTRODUCTION.

these occasions, but this ceremony has of late been disused, particularly among the associated ministers of Lancashire and Cheshire. The conveyance of any spiritual power or authority by this act of imposition, we always disclaimed. We well know that we have them not in ourselves, and that therefore it would be folly as well as injustice to pretend to communicate them to others. We hold no uninterrupted succession of divinely authorized bishops or inspired pastors from the Apostles days to the present time ; but are willing to place this religious practice upon the same ground with our other public services in the Church, urging as our chief reasons for continuing it, the prospect of advantage naturally attending it, and our mutual improvement in religious knowledge

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knowledge and christian piety and virtue.

And I would, once for all, remark here, that the chief reason we as Dissenters give for the continued use of the positive ordinances and special usages of christianity, is, their obvious good moral and religious tendency; leaving all extraordinary operations and sudden supernatural effects to the miraculous ages.

As a conclusion to this article as far as it relates to Dissenters, I cannot but remark, that this ceremony of ordination amongst them, is so far from being chargeable with fanaticism or enthusiasm, that it seems to be natural and useful, and calculated to have a good influence

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influence upon the mind and conduct of the hearers.

When a young man is taking upon him the charge of a congregation, what more proper, than the instruction, advice, and admonition of some of his senior brethren? What a useful religious and moral effect is a word spoken likely to have at that season, when his heart is probably most susceptible of pious and good impressions! And how improving may this service be to ministers in general, in reviving and establishing in their own minds, a becoming sense of all their peculiar and indispensable obligations!

Ordination, performed according to the rituals of the Church of England, consists

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consists of a subscription to the thirty-nine articles, and a pretended communication of the Holy Ghost, and of a power and authority to forgive and retain the sins of mankind.

Among the articles to which they subscribe are the following : Art. VIII. *That the creed of St. Athanasius ought thoroughly to be believed and received; for it may be proved by most certain warrants of the Holy Scripture.* Art. IX. *That ORIGINAL, or BIRTH SIN is the fault or corruption of the nature of every man, that is naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam; and in every person born into this world it deserveth God's WRATH AND DAMNATION.* Art. XVII. *That PREDESTINATION to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby*
(before

fore the foundation of the world) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour, and as the godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable comfort to godly persons; so for curious and carnal persons, lacking the spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of unclean living.

Besides subscribing these articles, and others equally liable to objection, the
candidate

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candidate is to receive from the Bishop the Holy Ghost, and an authority to forgive or to retain the sins of men.

The words pronounced on this occasion are as follow. *Receive the HOLY*

+ GHOST—*Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven: and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained: in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

This is giving every priest an authority to dispose of the souls of men as he pleases, to carry the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and to open and shut the gates thereof at pleasure; a more transcendent power than which the Pope himself does not claim. May I not justly call this a piece of solemn pageantry.

pageantry, highly dishonourable to Almighty God, and disgraceful to the religion of Christ.

To shew that I have not overstrained this matter, or given a prejudiced and unfair turn to it, I shall beg leave to quote the words of Dr. *Stebbing*, in his *Instructions of a Parish Minister*. Part II.

“ That some of the methods practised
“ in the primitive Church, with regard to restoring penitents have very
“ much the air of a farce : that for
“ the first thousand years the forms of
“ absolution ran all in the form of a
“ prayer, and not in the form of a
“ peremptory definitive sentence, as it
“ now stands in the Popish forms, and
“ in one of our own forms, from them
“ (visitation of the sick). The Po-
“ pish

INTRODUCTION. xxx

"pish form of ORDINATION" he ob-
 serves also, is "retained in the Church
 "of England. These two forms are
 "relative to each other, and cannot
 "stand separately: for the one conveys
 "the power which the other exer-
 "ciseth; and they are NOVELTIES alike.
 "The late Bishop Bull, he says, who
 "was one of the ablest scholars, the
 "stanchest Churchmen, and the best
 "christian of his time, when he was
 "upon his death-bed, refused to have
 "this form read: and ordered the
 "minister that attended him, to use
 "that form which stands in the office
 "for the holy communion in its stead.
 "He freely blames those who grasp at
 "the shadow of an authority, which in
 "truth and substance we must all re-
 "nounce. What else do we, when
we

“we *pretend* to absolve conscience?
 “We may use an hundred distinctions,
 “if we please: we may say that the
 “absolution is not authoritative but
 “declaratory; or, that it is not judicial
 “but ministerial: but if you would
 “speak to be understood, you must say,
 “that, with respect to any real internal
 “effect, it is nothing; and you will
 “speak truth too: for all the rest, if
 “you will preserve to God his preroga-
 “tive to forgive sin, are words without
 “meaning.”

These are the sentiments of a good
 Churchman with regard to the form
 of ordination and the power pretended
 to be thereby communicated, and in
 consequence of that exercised by the
 clergy of the Established Church.

How

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How inexpressibly astonishing, that such a ceremony should at this day be used in a Protestant Church ! The bishop might with as much propriety pretend to bestow the gift of tongues, prophesy, and working miracles.

I may further observe, that the established form of ordination has given great offence to some of the Clergy themselves. Bishop Burnet, in the preface to his Pastoral Care says, “ that
 “ the ember-weeks were the burden
 “ and grief of his life ; because the
 “ things that he was then called to see
 “ and perform, with regard to the can-
 “ didates who came to be ordained,
 “ did often tear his heart and pierce
 “ his soul, and make him cry out—
 “ O that I had the wings of a dove !”

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It is also worthy of our notice, that the present established form of ordination took its rise only about the eleventh or twelfth century, a time of the greatest ignorance and degeneracy. Out of sixteen of the most ancient forms of ordination given us by Morinus, a learned priest; in the first fifteen, the words "Receive thou the Holy Ghost, whose sins, &c." are not made use of. It is only in the sixteenth (which he supposes to be about three hundred years old) that this enormous power is claimed.

By the foregoing account of the Presbyterians, I have rendered it almost unnecessary to say any thing of that late congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Liverpool, called Octagonians.

The

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The latter in no respect differed from the former, but in the use of a stated liturgy, containing a morning and evening service, and a third form of devotion, to be used at the minister's discretion on either part of the day, for the sake of greater variety; with some collects for particular occasions. They were called octagonians from the form of their chapel, which was octagonal.

Having thus given a brief account of the worship and principles of Dissenters, and of that particular congregation called Octagonians, and pointed out the chief differences betwixt them and the established church; with this I thought to have concluded. But upon a review of our religious opinions and worship, and a comparison betwixt

them and the establishment, I cannot pass over in silence this opportunity of making a public reply to those false and very unjust accusations, which I have frequently heard brought against Presbyterians, sometimes in conversation, sometimes from the pulpit.

They are often represented by those of the Establishment as enthusiasts and ignorant fanatics, hypocrites, enemies to civil government, with many other opprobrious charges.

As to the charge of enthusiasm and fanaticism, I doubt not but there is as much of this in the Church as amongst any Dissenters, and that this is not a meer groundless suspicion, many publications of the Established Clergy fully testify :

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testify : almost every one's personal knowledge has furnished him with some instances in support of this opinion. And I am persuaded no such enthusiastic opinion can be laid to the charge of any sectary, as that maintained in the public form of ecclesiastic ordination which I have before noticed. The greatest fanatics amongst Dissenters never pretended to confer the Holy Ghost, or communicate an authority to forgive or retain sins.

As to the allegation of ignorance, this doubtless is principally levelled against the ministers of this persuasion. To prove the falsity of which charge, I appeal to the numerous publications of the Dissenting Clergy in every branch of useful literature, as well as

d 3 religion,

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religion, which stand foremost in the opinion of the learned, judicious, and at the same time, unprejudiced part of mankind. Let me also inform those that are ignorant of it, that every minister amongst the liberal Dissenters, after receiving a classical education, proceeds through a regular course of ethics, metaphysics, natural philosophy, Jewish antiquities and divinity, and after finishing these academic studies, generally passes an examination before some ministers of learning and reputation, with whose approbation he commences a preacher. Give me leave here to remark, that there are numbers of the Established Clergy, who have had none of these advantages, who are much strangers to all sorts of religious knowledge, whose whole stock of learning

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ing was obtained at some little country school, that they enter the pulpit very meanly qualified to speak before a tolerable audience, and often with such a provincial accent, as is very disgusting to a man of liberal education, nay, to some perhaps unintelligible.

As to the accusation of craft and hypocrisy, I know no principles amongst the Dissenters that have any tendency to encourage these vices. There are knaves and hypocrites of all religious professions in the world: they are not confined to any particular sect or establishment, and I appeal to any man, whether from his own knowledge, there are not as many respectable, upright, honest men amongst Dissenters, in proportion to

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their numbers, as in any other persuasion. I must acknowledge it appears to me particularly strange, that Dissenters should pointedly be charged with the vice of hypocrisy: What are the advantages they obtain by adhering to an unpopular sect, who labour under evident disadvantages and discouragements, such as fines, and forfeitures of honourable and profitable posts under civil government? The test act is to them an abridgment of some privileges, which the members of the national church may enjoy. And can we reconcile it to common sense and self-love, that a man of no principle should continue a nonconformist, which is attended with many inconveniences, when he might practise the same arts of fraud with more advantage and popularity?

But

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But though I am fully persuaded this general charge of insincerity against Dissenters cannot be validated by any proofs, yet were we inclined to return railing for railing, there is, I think, some reason for this accusation against the Establishment from some of its stated usages, and the conduct of some of its clergy in transactions of a public nature.

What I ask, is the oath every clergyman takes at the time of his induction to a living?

"I, A. B. do swear that I have
"made no simoniacal payment, con-
"tract, or promise, directly or indi-
"rectly, by myself, or by any other
"person to my knowledge, or with
"my

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“ my consent, to any person or persons
“ whatsoever, for, or concerning, the
“ procuring and obtaining of this
“ ecclesiastic dignity, place, prefer-
“ ment, office, or living, to which
“ I am now presented; nor will at any
“ time hereafter, perform, or satisfy any
“ such kind of payment, contract, or
“ promise, made by any other, with-
“ out my knowledge or consent. So
“ HELP ME GOD THROUGH JESUS
“ CHRIST.”

Now after taking this strict and so-
lemn oath, what can we think of the
integrity of that man, who has actually
made a formal pecuniary contract for
his living, and paid a consideration for
it according to its value, as for a tem-
poral estate?

Finally,

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Finally, Dissenters have been accused as enemies to civil government, friends to republican principles, and bitter foes to monarchy.

In answer to which, I honestly declare I believe this charge to be entirely without foundation. I do not know one single Dissenter, who is a republican, or who is not as good a friend to our civil constitution on the principles of the revolution, as any description of men in the kingdom. And to give strength to my assertion, I observe that in two successive rebellions, the then kings of England found not any of their subjects more ready to grant them all the assistance in their power than the Presbyterians.

There

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There is indeed one particular transaction in the revolutions of the English government, which by being falsely represented, has been held up as an argument against the truth of my assertion. I mean the death of CHARLES I. the contrivance and accomplishment of which has been commonly, though very unjustly attributed to the Presbyterians. Had this really been the case, they could not from this circumstance, I think, have justly been deemed enemies of the English constitution; for it is incontrovertibly true, that the constitution was entirely subverted under the government of this prince; the house of lords and commons were both entirely destroyed, their authority and power, according to the laws of the land, totally abolished; and it was in order to maintain

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tain the constitution of this kingdom, that the king at first met with opposition to his tyrannical measures.

Money was levied without the sanction of parliament, as this branch of the legislature not having then indeed any existence. The courts of the star chamber, and high commission, under the royal sanction, committed the most flagrant acts of injustice against the lives, properties and liberties of the subject; and the allowed prerogative of the crown was destroyed, not having the power of afterwards dissolving a parliament when summoned. Should this ever be the case in England again (which God forbid) I hope Presbyterians will not be the only persons in the kingdom that will vigorously oppose

xlvi INTRODUCTION.

pose such measures, and the abettors of them.

But passing by these things, it may uncontrovertibly be proved, that the Presbyterians were not the authors of this king's death. So far from it, that they were his most strenuous advocates, and in Neal's History of the Puritans, a copy of a spirited remonstrance, signed by upwards of fifty of the principal Presbyterian Ministers in and about London, to the General and Council of war, protesting against the trial and condemnation of Charles I. and entreating them in the most earnest manner to desist from all violent proceedings against him. And not only so, but the united testimony of historians leaves it beyond doubt, that they were the principal

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principal instruments in the restoration. Clarendon says, that when the parliament of England were for sending an army against Charles II. on his arrival in Scotland, all the Presbyterian party opposed it; they were bold in contradicting Cromwell in the House, and crossing all his designs in the city. Monk, says Rapin, knowing how the Presbyterians stood affected, employed, probably, Clarges his confident, to make a secret agreement with some of their chiefs, for the restoration of Charles II. by which means it became a Presbyterian parliament. It continued only twenty-five days, in which time the following resolutions amongst others were made.

1. They ordered a general discharge of all the imprisoned friends of the king.

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king. (2) They repealed the oath for the abjuration of Charles Stuart, and all the royal family. (3) They abrogated the oath, requiring to be faithful to the established government without a king and house of peers. (4) They took away all commissions from republicans in the militia. (5) They dissolved themselves, and issued writs for new members. And Rapin says, this was a parliament in which the Presbyterians had a superiority of voices: consequently the Presbyterians restored the king to the throne.

Bishop Burnett says, these five following persons, all Presbyterians, had the chief hand in the restoration, viz. Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, afterwards Earl of Shaftesbury; Sir Arthur Annesley;

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Annesley, Den. Hollis, the Earl of Manchester, and Lord Roberts. I could produce much more evidence to the same purpose, were it necessary; but I suppose this is a point which is now pretty generally acknowledged.

Thus I have endeavoured to vindicate the Presbyterians* against some of the popular articles of accusation

* To prevent misapprehension, I think it necessary to observe, that by the term Presbyterians I by no means understand those, whose Churches are governed by Presbyterians; or are any way connected with civil establishments. For want of a term of greater precision, I have made use of it to mark those Protestant Dissenters in this kingdom, who are in general friends to free enquiry, and liberty in religion; and whose ministers have had a regular education, in contradistinction to all those enthusiasts and fanatics who rank under the same denomination.

I INTRODUCTION.

against them, in which I believe I have invariably adhered to truth. I shall perhaps be blamed by some Dissenters, for reviving a controversy which has long slept, and be censured by some good churchmen, as impertinently meddling with affairs which they may think did not concern me. In reply to whom I answer, I have said nothing with a view to gain favour with, or irritate any party. I have advanced nothing but what appeared to me great and important truths; and as it never was my disposition to conceal the truth for fear of offending, so I hope it never will.

I bear no ill-will to the Church, nor am I weakly prejudiced in favour of my own denomination. The objections

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tions I have urged against the Establishment, are such as appear to me to affect the reputation, and even the existence of the Christian Religion. The Bishop of Chester, in his late Volume of excellent Sermons (Serm. IX.) says, "It is a charge brought against the Jesuit missionaries in China, that finding the people of that country exceedingly scandalized at the doctrine of a crucified Redeemer, they thought it prudent to deny that Christ was ever crucified: they affirmed, that it was nothing more than a calumny invented by the Jews to throw a disgrace on Christianity." The consequence of which was that there is not now one single christian in China. Upon which his Lordship urges the necessity of representing Christianity in

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its native purity and simplicity, without art or disguise.

Now to me there appears very little difference betwixt adding to, or diminishing from the religion of Jesus; and the former may probably be attended with as bad effects as we find the latter has been. Let us then examine one doctrine of the Established Church by this rule; I mean the Athanasian creed, which few pretend to believe, and no one to understand; yet thirteen times every year this is publicly read in the church, and every man that assents not to it is declared to be eternally damned. Now, if this is not a doctrine of Christianity, what effect is the public use of it likely to have upon the minds of men? Certainly none that is friendly

to

INTRODUCTION. liii

to religion. May we not rather suppose that it will lead people to deride and neglect Public Devotion, and to promote that spirit, which a Rev. Prelate observes is now very predominant, viz. "to ridicule and rail at christianity with little reserve, and at the teachers of it without any at all."

I have only to add, that I desire no person will consider the specimens of the forms of public worship, and other christian institutions, subjoined to the following discourses, as supposed to be remarkably perfect, or in any respect extraordinary in their composition, or expression; nor the sentiments delivered in them, or in any other part of this discourse, as necessarily belonging to Dissenters. There will ever
be

be a difference in the sentiments of men concerning religious matters, both as to the things themselves, and their use and importance. A unity of belief, is what even no establishment in the world can possibly effect; but there will be still a greater diversity of opinion, where it is an allowed maxim that every man may freely judge and determine for himself: for there will always be some persons whose creed will be influenced by the prospect of emolument, and others so stupid as to think it even a virtue blindly to submit to authority in religious matters. The distinguishing characteristic of Non-conformists, will therefore necessarily prevent any one from giving an exact account of the religious notions of such persons. But I think I may safely venture

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venture to affirm, that what I have above advanced, is agreeable to the generality of the Presbyterians that I have been connected with, and to the liberal sort of Dissenters in general, of whom alone I originally intended to be understood to speak. The sermons are added not as masterly compositions, but chiefly with a view to make the volume more compleat.

I am very sensible, there are many persons who would have done infinitely more credit to the cause I have espoused, than myself; but as nothing so comprehensive as this, has been attempted by any person that I know of, I hope favourable allowances will be made for a man, in whose plan of publication, vanity and ostentation

lvi INTRODUCTION.

tation have not had the least influence, and who, from some particular circumstances, has been led to consider these matters more carefully than he would otherwise have done, and has written only with a sincere regard to the cause of religion and truth.

SERMON

S E R M O N I.

ON THE NECESSITY OF A CONSTANT AND
STEADY REGARD TO THE PRECEPTS OF
RELIGION AND MORALITY.

EZEKIEL xxxiii. 13—16. ✕

*When I shall say to the righteous, that
he shall surely live, if he trust to his own
righteousness, and commit iniquity, all
his righteousness shall not be remem-
bered, but for his iniquity that he hath
committed he shall die for it. Again,
when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt
surely die, if he turn from his sin, and
do that which is lawful and right; if
the wicked restore the pledge, give
again that he hath robbed, walk in the*

B

statutes

statutes of life without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die: none of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him; he hath done that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live.

THE more desirous any one is of arriving at a certainty concerning God's moral government of the world, and at a competent knowledge of the laws by which this government is supported, the more thankful will he be for the oracles of sacred wisdom; for in these he will find many discoveries relating to the ways of the Almighty, which by the exercise of his own reason he could never have attained. That there will be a general resurrection of all mankind —that

—that Christ will judge the world—
 that the faithful servants of God shall
 be eternally happy after this life, are
 universally acknowledged to be im-
 portant truths, for which we are in-
 debted to divine revelation. The
 sentiment contained in the words of
 our text also, seems entirely scriptural;
 and we are wholly indebted to reve-
 lation for the instruction which it
 contains.

*When I say to the righteous, he shall
 surely live, if he trust to his own righte-
 ousness, which has been very distinguish-
 ed for many years in the former part
 of his life; and afterwards allows him-
 self in sinful practices to the end of his
 days; then his future state will be
 miserable, according to his character in*

4 S E R M O N I.

the latter part of his conduct, and the very reverse to what it would have been, had he continued in his righteousness. And on the other hand, though a man has lived a wicked and vicious life for many years, yet if he forsakes his evil ways, and leads a sober religious life to the end of his days, the future state of that man shall be happy; and he shall be freed from all the fatal consequences that would have followed, had he died in a state of impenitence.

I would now observe, that we come to this knowledge, not by natural reason, but by the assistance of divine revelation. This matter, were we left to reason only, might be variously disputed; and we should have been in some hazard of falling into a very dangerous

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dangerous mistake. For, as appears from this passage, it cannot be accounted less than a very dangerous mistake, to think that men who have been nearly equal in their vices, or in their virtues, when the whole of their conduct is considered, shall be nearly equal in their future misery, or future happiness. Since the time of life, in which the one is righteous, may give him the advantage, or the disadvantage; not only *may*, but *will* most certainly do it, if we believe what is here asserted by the prophet. For though virtue and religion do in a very exemplary manner, influence the conduct of any man for several years; yet afterwards, if he grows indifferent to these things, and pursues a course of life entirely inconsistent with them, and dies in this

B 3 course,

course; according to this his future state will be determined, and not according to what he once was, when virtuous dispositions had the ascendancy. Unassisted by divine revelation, it is probable, many persons would have thought otherwise, and have considered equal virtues as rendering men equally acceptable to God, and equal vices just the reverse, in whatever period of life the one or the other of these had been performed. We might imagine the divine determination would be according to what the balance was, when the sum total of men's virtues and vices were compared. Neither does it indeed seem within the reach of our natural understanding, had we no revealed religion, to confute such an opinion. So far from it, that many
cases

cases might be put in the support of it very strong, and as such would generally be admitted.

Suppose for instance two persons, whose advantages for religion, and whose temptations in the world, are from first to last pretty much the same; suppose also that the one becomes very early impressed with pious and religious sentiments, is dutiful to his parents while young, and as he grows up discovers very amiable dispositions, is very exemplary in his conduct, and lives till a few years before his death, in a very sober, religious and virtuous manner; when, falling unhappily into evil company, or into the way of such temptations as draw him aside, he degenerates into the practice of irreligion and vice, and perishes therein.

Suppose the other person, though possessed of equal advantages from a religious education, early discovering very bad dispositions, is disobedient to all parental authority in the infancy of life, becomes abandoned in his conduct, and continues incorrigible in vice and impiety, till towards the close of life; then admit he becomes a sincere penitent, that his conscience is powerfully impressed with the convicting influences of religion, that from henceforth his heart is purified, and his life exemplarily virtuous and good, and that both continue so till his departure out of the world. Now that of these two, without a divine revelation, we should agree that the latter was more worthy of the favourable regard of God hereafter, and would be more likely to obtain it; is
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so far from being a clear point, that perhaps there is more reason to think we are led to the belief of it, and to the defence of this belief, through the assistance of Scripture. For had it not been for this, in passing a judgment upon two such characters, we should probably only have taken the aggregate of their virtues and vices into the estimate, exclusive of all other considerations. And if so, we must have thought that it would hereafter be better with him, who had been the more righteous; that is a longer time so. For it is certain that equal virtue, under equal helps, and equal discouragements, must, in itself considered, be of equal worth, in this or the other part of life. And if so, that more favour would be shewn to him, who had been more virtuous,

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upon an impartial examination into their conduct from first to last, although the latter part of his life might be much worse than the other. But revelation affirms it will be otherwise; and herein all things considered, the ways of the Almighty appear wise, just, and merciful.

To shew this, I proceed to observe, that when all things are taken into the account, this measure of the divine conduct under our examination seems perfectly agreeable to our highest and best thoughts of the divine nature: since considering the uncertainty of life, the general interest of religion is much better secured, than if it had been otherwise. We know it is clearly the language of the christian religion, that
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those who leave the world in a sinful and impenitent state of mind, alienated in the temper of their souls from the great God, and unadorned with the graces and virtues of the Gospel, shall suffer future punishment; and that it is never once intimated, that their being, even for many years, of a different character, shall prevent their final condemnation. All such, are in the oracles of sacred truth, spoken of as those, who shall hereafter be amongst the unhappy and miserable. It therefore deserves our attention to consider, how the general interest of religion is thus better secured, than it would be if a different plan of government was established.

Now if an equal series of regard to religion and virtue in one part of life,

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as in another, would give mankind an equal interest in the divine favour and regard, then encouragement could not be given to sincere penitents in the latter part of life, without others, who for many years lived in a much more exemplary manner, taking encouragement from thence, to relax in their regard to the obligations of religion: since they might do this, and still be beforehand with the other in the practice of virtue, the number of their good deeds, the quantity of their obedience; and thus through a too confident security, many might towards the close of life, grow negligent and remiss in the performance of their duty. This security might lead them into such a conduct, as greatly to detract from the excellency of their character,

character, and cause unjust reflections to be cast on the cause of piety and virtue.

That the greatest regard will be had to the habitual conduct and disposition of the mind, in the latter part of life, considering the uncertain number of our days, seems calculated, in the best manner, to support the general interest of religion. We are every moment liable to die; and therefore from the beginning of our probationary state, it is incumbent upon us, to live constantly under the influence of religion, and in the practice of our duty, lest the day of death should unexpectedly overtake us unprepared for it, and cut us off for ever from all hopes of the divine mercy and favour. If it is necessary

necessary to our being partakers of future happiness, that we must, before this state of trial be over, subdue every sinful passion and inclination, and be prevailingly good in our dispositions and desires; then our uncertain continuance here, is in every part of life, a perpetual motive to religious obedience,—a motive that can never be rationally overlooked, and that grows stronger as life advances.

Does any one think it would have been kind in our Creator to have given a certain unalterable term and boundary to human life, so that at any period we might have known, how much time was before us? Scarcely a weaker thought than this can enter into our minds. For if the perpetual uncertainty

tainty which mankind are under, as to the time of launching into an eternal world, will not solemnly engage them to the performance of their duty;—remove the uncertainty, give them assurance of life for a long time to come, and would they not then rest abundantly more content and satisfied in their follies and evil practices? Would not the same vicious passions and inclinations they are now subject to, have been then able to have pleaded more strongly for their irregular gratification? Would not conscience have been much more easily soothed, and have consented to unworthy conduct much more readily, having an assurance of many years to come before their probationary state should be ended? They who wish there were no diseases, no calamities, no afflictions

to

to shorten human life, before it attained old age, and then at a fixed period it should decline; with such an alteration in the course of Providence, as would be extremely injurious to us. If the habits of goodness, if the practice of piety, righteousness, and virtue in this state, are necessary to our happiness in that which is to come, we may then plainly see the wisdom of our precarious situation here below. To a religious conduct, from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year, it is an unanswerable motive, a powerful incentive. It is always an argument for our serving God at present, that carries with it sufficient weight to convince every one who will impartially consider it.

But

But besides the uncertainty of life, on which the measures of Providence under our consideration seem to be founded; I cannot but observe, that their conduct is attended with peculiar aggravations, who desert religion after a long and serious profession of it. Such motives ought to influence them, as they have experienced the truth of; particularly the pleasures resulting from a conscientious regard to their duty. They discourage the young from entering the paths of religion, which they behold forsaken by those who had long walked in them; and they prevent others, who are unhappily entangled in the snares of vice, from returning to their duty and pursuing their truest happiness. They are endeavouring to contract as fast they can, the dispositions

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and habits, which disgrace human nature, make them unlike to God, and unfit for heaven.

From what has been said, it appears, that it must be our highest wisdom, by a *patient continuance in well doing*, to *seek for glory, honour, and immortality*. Our duty can never be discharged beforehand. We are not in this view, to be compared to labourers, who have a certain task set them by their masters, so that by great diligence for a time they may finish their work, long before the term he allowed them is expired, and then spend the remainder of it just as they please, without being accountable. The duties we have to perform as probationary creatures cannot possibly be done before
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the end of life; for to God we owe all our time, and all our capacity of service. And if ever we desert this course, we take a sure method to destroy all the good effects of what we have formerly done. We see therefore what reason there is, for such exhortations as these: *Continue ye in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel which ye have heard. Beware, lest being led astray by the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness; for we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.* Innumerable other passages of scripture there are to the same purpose; but I will add only one or two more. *If they who had escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our*

Lord and Saviour, in one part of life, are afterward entangled therein, and overcome, then the latter end shall be worse with them than the beginning. As ye have received the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk ye in him, holding faith and a good conscience; and continue in the love of Christ, that when he shall appear, ye may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming. How will many on this great occasion be filled with shame and confusion, who unhappily forsake the paths of duty and wisdom, for some time before their death! For this, what remorse of conscience will prey upon them hereafter! How will they upbraid themselves when it is too late! How much future vexation will they feel, for such folly; to think they were once in the way to eternal happiness,

once

once in the divine favour, with the fair prospect of having it for ever secured to them ! This leads to another practical reflection, which is,

That to take much pains about our religious and moral conduct, for a long series of time, and after all to ruin ourselves by indulging evil inclinations and wicked passions, is certainly the greatest of all folly. A man cannot act more inconsistently, or indeed any way plunge himself into more distress. To go through all the difficulties of becoming religious, till the habit of discharging its duties with pleasure is contracted, and after this, on any account to decline, till the once agreeable duties of religion are no more regarded, nor its sacred pleasures any more relished ;

is such a change as cannot be accounted for but by the greatest infatuation. That a man should for a course of years honour God, make conscience of the duties of piety, and of keeping himself unspotted from the world; that he should long with unshaken integrity, maintain a deservedly amiable and worthy character, and should swerve from these shining and lovely paths of virtue and goodness, into the base and dark recesses of iniquity, though in consequence of this he is sure to be finally surrounded with ineffable horrors; is such a departure from all the dictates of reason, conscience, and interest, that one would almost think it impossible for a creature endued with understanding to be guilty of it. To surmount difficulties which lie in the way to happiness,

happinefs, and then to fly from the very happinefs itfelf, and voluntarily to degenerate into a ftate of wretchednefs and defpair; nothing can equal the folly of fuch conduct.

Do we not naturally pity thofe who begin any excellent undertaking, and go forward a confiderable time very fuccefsfully in it; do we not pity them when any thing arifes to prevent their progrefs, till it is completed? But moft of all have we reafon to do this, when we fee vice and paffion overthrow the fair ftructure which virtue had for many years been employed in building up. The moft fhocking fight in the world, is to fee a man degenerate from the uprightness of his conduct, to fee him neglect and forfake the duties of

piety, and the government of his passions; and for the transitory gratification of some evil disposition, dishonour his former character, wound the peace of his own mind, and blast his hope of the divine acceptance. What can be a more melancholy spectacle, than to see a man, after knowing better, and practising better; live at last a fool to his own true interest, and die with a load of guilt upon his bosom, terrified at the thoughts of God, and closing his eyes with a conscience full of horror at what is to come? Who would not grieve to see any of his acquaintance and friends, nay even an enemy, thus precipitating himself into remediless ruin? Who would not shudder at the thought of becoming himself guilty of such folly and madness; of
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falling from the heights of virtue, into the depths of vice; of sinking from the hope, and almost the possession of heaven, into the lowest abyfs of woe and misery?

Knowing thus the terrors of the Lord with respect to such as depart from their former righteousness, we endeavour to persuade men, and entreat you by all that is sacred and good, after having been for many years most commendably diligent in raising a structure of holiness and virtue in compliance with the requirements of the Gospel;—not to destroy the whole by *departing from the living God*. Bury not yourselves, and all your hopes for ever, under the ruins of vice. *Hold fast the honourable profession of your faith*

faith without wavering, and shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope, unto the end of your days. Be not slothful; but followers of them who through faith and patience, inherit the promises. Shun all those paths of unrighteousness, which darken as you advance in them; and which if pursued will lead to the benighted realms of woe. These avoid, and to all the deceitful pleasures of vice, prefer the peaceful and heavenly paths of virtue, which shine more and more unto the perfect day.

S E R M O N II.

ON THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW xvi. 21.

From that time forth Jesus began to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

THE design for which God sent his son into the world, was, that through him we might have life, that by him we might receive forgiveness of sins, and *an inheritance among them*
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who are sanctified. It is a very good and useful enquiry to consider how, and in what manner, Jesus prosecuted this great and good end, and finished the work his Father had given him to do. Were we fully to consider this point, it would lead us to take a view of the whole of our Saviour's life, from his birth at Bethlehem, to his death on Mount Calvary.

But I shall not at this time consider him in the light of a teacher sent from God, to make known the way of salvation; nor lay before you the excellent example of universal virtue and goodness, which he hath given us. I shall not call upon you to attend to the gracious and instructive words which proceeded out of his mouth, and by which he
extorted

extorted from his very enemies a confession, that *never man spake like unto him*. I shall not direct your thoughts to travel through the cities of Judea, and behold this man of God unweariedly going about doing good to the souls and bodies of men. This active part of our Saviour's life, I shall at present decline considering; and principally confine myself to the difficulties and hardships, the sorrows and sufferings which he underwent. This is the view in which Jesus represented himself to his disciples in the text. He shewed them, that he must suffer many things, and be killed.

Exceeding great were the sufferings to which the Son of God willingly submitted, while he was in this world.

Not

Not to be paralleled were the sufferings which this spotless Lamb of God patiently endured for our sakes, when he *humiled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* So great and so bitter were the sufferings which he sustained, that we may justly apply to him these words, *Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, and wherewith I am afflicted?*

To trace the sorrows and sufferings of this great Redeemer, we must take our rise from the first period of his appearing in the world, and continue the account through the whole of his public life, till upon the cross he bowed his head and *gave up the ghost.*

When he was *found in fashion as a man*, he did not covet to appear in
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high state and dignity, but *made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant.* He was born of low and mean, though honest and virtuous parents, and passed through life in one of its lowest stations. Instead of having great preparations made to receive him at his birth, and a legion of angels sent to guard his infant form, he was brought forth in an obscure inn, unattended, unnoticed, unassisted. He had a stable for his apartment, and a manger for his cradle; for there was no room in the inn itself for his parents to be lodged.

The heavenly hosts indeed did him honour at his birth, for they praised God, saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men.*

A celestial

A celestial light guided a few wise personages, to reverence him as one born king of the Jews. But what was the consequence of these few transient honours? They stirred up the jealousy and hatred of the murderous Herod, to seek the young child's life to destroy it.

Little suited as his parents could be to travel into a strange and distant country, yet they were obliged to flee precipitately with their infant son, into this distant land. There they continued with the child Jesus, till the death of Herod, exposed to all the inconveniences, which persons of their low station must necessarily suffer, far from their home, their acquaintance, and their friends.

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We have no other account of what happened to our Saviour from his childhood, till he came unto John to be baptized, but in general, that he was subject to his parents; that as he grew in stature, he grew also *in wisdom and favour both with God and man*; and that he wrought with his supposed father, in the laborious, but useful employment of a carpenter.

In all these things we see nothing that contributed to sweeten and endear life unto him, and make him fond of the stage whereon he was to act; but what rather tended to prepare him for that rougher and severer part, through which he was to pass, before he could say of his enterprize, *It is finished.*

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When he left the obscurities of private life, and entered upon the ministration of his public character, what was the reception he met with from the world? *He came unto his own, but his own received him not.* When he went about teaching in their synagogues repentance, and *preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of diseases among the people*, did all the generations that saw and heard him, and were benefited by him, fall down and call him blessed? Was he received with open arms, honoured and respected wherever he came?

Fain would I draw a veil over the disgrace of his countrymen, and not speak of the opposition they gave him,
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the reproach they cast upon him, and the cruel manner in which they used him from first to last. But the truth of history forbids it, and our own necessities require they should be made public: for these things are written for our instruction.

When we examine the Gospels, what is the idea we are taught to form of the life of Christ? Do we not find that it was a life of fatigue and hardship, of sorrow and trouble? Was he not without any habitation that he could call his own, without food to satisfy the necessities of nature, without money to answer the demands that were made upon him, and without friends to take care of and comfort him? Was not his time spent in one continued course

of doing good offices, and receiving evil ones in return? Did not the Jews load and vilify him with the foulest names, and ascribe even his best actions to the basest and worst principles? Did they not pursue him from place to place, and more than once seek tumultuously to take away his life? Being resolved that he should die, they represented him as not fit to live. Through their clamour and importunity they prevailed on the Roman governor to put him to death, though Pilate was satisfied of his innocence, and declared he could find in him nothing worthy of death.

But it was not death simply that he endured, but death embittered with every ingredient that can make it dreadful. When his hour was near come,

every

every thing conspired to render his condition most distressing and deplorable. You will bear with me in running over some of the chief circumstances of our Saviour's affliction, at his leaving this world. And will you let your meditations accompany me, while I attempt to describe the sorrowful scene? You who are going to the Lord's table, there to commemorate the death and sufferings of Christ, will, I am persuaded, take these things into serious consideration, and with all the soothing emotions of a pensive heart, dwell upon the contemplation of them.

By the eye of a contemplative faith, see the Saviour of men retiring from the crowd of his disciples, into the garden, to prepare himself for the sad

scene which lay before him. Think what must have been the perplexity and distress of his mind, when he began to be *sorrowful, sore amazed, and very heavy*. Think what he must have endured, when his body was in an agony of pain, so that *his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground*. Think how pungent what he felt must have been, before he could say, that *his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*. Think what must have been the state of his mind, when no less than three times, he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him, saying, *If it be possible, O Father, let the bitter cup pass from me*. Think how inconceivably great the sorrow and oppression of his spirit must be, when

when it was necessary that an angel should be sent from heaven, to comfort and support him under it. As the Scriptures have not told us, it is a vain and fruitless enquiry to consider what could occasion this great depression and grief of heart, this strong reluctance to taste the bitter cup.

More useful and more satisfactory will it be, in our thoughts to make one in that good company, who, with weeping eyes and grief torn hearts, at a distance followed their Saviour to his crucifixion, and there saw how he was persecuted and despitefully used. Imagine then you still see the holy and righteous Jesus in the garden, standing with his disciples, fully prepared and satisfied, to be, and to do, whatever it

was the will of his Father, that he should do and suffer. Behold now a large company, privately entering the place of his retirement, and with eager steps advancing, to seize the Lord of life, led on by a base and treacherous friend. Think how grievous it must have been to him, to be betrayed by his own disciple and pretended friend, one of that little flock whom he chose to be always with him, one whom he had obliged in a particular manner, and cherished as it were in his own bosom: to be betrayed by him, under a pretence, and with a token of love and friendship; for the cruel ingrate approached him, with his usual freedom and respect, saying, *Hail, Master, and kissed him.*— Had an enemy watched him and done this, it would not so much have grieved his

his righteous soul; but for his own familiar friend, who did eat of his bread, and in whom he trusted, thus to deliver him into the power of those who sought his life, for the poor price of thirty pieces of silver; this was the killing circumstance which added bitterness to his woe.

Hail, Master, said the traitor with one breath, and kissed him; and with the next, *This same is he, lay hands on him, and hold him fast*. Immediately he is arrested by the officers, armed with swords and staves; and the Lord of glory is carried off as a prisoner, and treated as a common robber and malefactor. He that *did no sin*, is served as the chief of sinners. He that came *to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance*

deliverance to the captives, and to set at liberty them that are bound, is himself led about bound, and denied the common offices of humanity. He that came into the world, to save men's lives, who healed their diseases, cured their sicknesses, and gave general ease and relief to all their maladies, can himself find no safety, no ease, no relief, no justice, from the very persons he had so greatly benefited.

Think what a dismal and afflicting circumstance it must be to Jesus, to be committed to the pleasure and insult of an ungodly multitude, and exposed to all the coarse language, and rougher treatment of those, who were *the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things*. See him dragged by them
through

through the city, from one place, from one tribunal, from one unjust ruler to another. How eager are the false witnesses, who were suborned to take away his life, to put an invidious and false construction upon his words, and to accuse him of things and purposes, that were at the greatest distance from him to think or do? Even in the court of judicature, where, generally, in the most iniquitous times, an appearance of decency and justice is preserved, he is treated most vilely and inhumanly. Some spit in his face, and buffet him; others cover his face, and contemptuously smite him with the palms of their hands, saying in profane mockery, *Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?* Ah, base and cruel people, thus to injure
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and insult the meek and innocent Jesus! Ah, more base and cruel priests and rulers, to permit and encourage such inhumanity and wickedness! But what is it that malice and envy, exasperated by religious phrenzy, will not do?

What an additional circumstance in his affliction must it be, to be left alone in the midst of his distress; not one friend, not one disciple, not one acquaintance to bear him company, and to support and encourage him under all the infamy and ill usage which he received! How must it wound his affectionate heart, to see them all, in the hour of his difficulty, flee away to secure their own safety, as if unconcerned what became of their kind master and faithful friend! — that very master and friend,

friend, to whom, but a little before, they had professed the strongest attachment, and declared themselves ready to follow to imprisonment and death ! But, alas ! in the time of his tribulation, *they all forsook him and fled.* Hereby that came to pass which was written, *I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.*

What aggravated weight must it add to his sorrows and sufferings at this time, to see Peter, who seemed for a while to have recovered his courage, relapse, and become more guilty than all the rest ! How afflicting must it be for him, to hear that disciple, who had professed so much zeal, and made such solemn promises of owning Christ, and
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adhering to him, even though he should die for it, shamefully deny and disown him, and confirm the falsehood with oaths and curses!

Thus was Jesus left destitute, and exposed to the outrage of his enemies, who hated him without cause: thus was he treated in the most barbarous manner. After they had recreated themselves with his disgrace and misery; after they had seen him publicly scourged and set at nought; after they had ignominiously led him about in mock-majesty, with a crown of thorns upon his head, they proceeded to act the last part of their intended tragedy, and to bathe their hands in his most innocent blood.

It was not simply death, as hath been observed before, that Jesus suffered;

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but the death of the cross ; a death above all other the most painful, and the most shameful. So ignominious was it, that it was inflicted upon none but the vilest of malefactors. It was the punishment of robbers and murderers, provided they were also slaves ; otherwise, if they were freemen, this death was thought too scandalous for them. And such we find were the companions of Christ in his death ; for he was crucified between two thieves.

The death of the cross was dreadful above all other kinds of death, for the pain and torture, as well as the shame of it. The whole weight of the body depended upon the hands and feet, which were nailed to the cross, and must needs occasion the most acute and racking

racking misery and anguish. Together with its being thus exquisitely tormenting, it was a slow and lingering death. For though Jesus continued no less than three hours in this insufferable torture, before, with strong cries and groans, he gave up the ghost; yet when a friend came to beg his body, the governor was surprized to hear that he was dead already: a circumstance which distinguished him from the two thieves, whose legs were broken in cruel kindness, that an end might likewise be put to their misery, and their lives.

But even this death, shameful and painful, detestable and accursed, as it was; was not the whole, I had almost said was not the worst thing, that he suffered

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suffered from their hands. It is usual when a malefactor is led to execution, and suffers the just sentence of the law, for the crowd of his spectators to relent, and commiserate his unhappy fate, and to follow him to his end, with sighs and tears. Though they approved the sentence of the judge, and when they heard his crime, said that he ought to die; yet there is none of the whole multitude, that is assembled on such an occasion, who could bear to hear another make a jest of the criminal's sufferings, and in the very article of death, treat him with ridicule and scorn. Instead of adding reproaches and revilings to the severity of his sufferings, you would scarce find one amongst those who are not remarkable for the tenderness of their feelings, who would

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not at that time, contribute every thing in his power, to alleviate his distress, and abate the weight of his sufferings.

If now we examine how it was with the holy and just one, we shall find there was accumulated upon him, every thing that could make the most cruel death more cruel. The malice of his enemies did not subside, their revenge was not satisfied, when they saw him buffeted, scourged, and nailed to the cross. As if they had divested themselves of all humanity, and armed their hearts with the most savage fierceness, the people which stood by beheld his sufferings as if they were the joy of their hearts. How must it increase the torment of what he felt, to hear the cruel mockings and derisions of the priests

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priests and rulers, who scoffingly said, *He saved others, let him save himself, if he be the chosen of God.* They also who passed by on the road, railed on him, and reviled him, waving their heads and saying, *Save thyself now, and come down from the cross, and we will believe in thee.* When spent with the violence of his pain, he said, *I thirst,* the soldiers also mocked him, and denied his last poor request; for they offered him only vinegar to drink: which having received, and finding there was no abatement of their barbarity, he said, *It is finished.* Then he cried with a loud voice, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:* and having said thus, he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Such was our Saviour's misery and death; — such, and far more distressing

and sorrowful, than words can express, or it is possible for thought to conceive. When you turn your thoughts to the part, which his persecutors acted, and consider their relentless and bloody malice, I wonder not, if, full of holy indignation and grief of heart, you should say, *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a Man, and in their self will, they crucified the Lord's Anointed.* On the other hand, when you turn your eyes to the cross, and see Jesus hanging thereon, and consider what he suffered, and why he suffered, I cannot wonder, that your hearts are filled with sympathizing sorrow, and your mouths silent through the greatness of your grief; and

and that you should go away from this sad spectacle, smiting on your breasts. For your comfort, in the midst of your tribulation, let me direct you to the words which Jesus spake to his disciples, and to the company who bewailed and lamented him, when going to be crucified. *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. Let not your hearts be troubled, for I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you. Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*

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S E R M O N III.

ON OUR SAVIOUR'S TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS.

MARK i. 13.

*And he was in the wilderness forty days
tempted of Satan, and was with the
wild beasts, and the angels ministered
unto him.*

IT cannot be denied, that there are considerable difficulties in explaining this part of our Saviour's history. By the generality of christians it is understood as a narrative of a real fact, and the whole is interpreted in a literal sense.—Against this there are many,

great, and perhaps unanswerable objections. Even those who are advocates for the literal interpretation are obliged, in explaining some part of this transaction, to depart from it, and adopt that which is visionary. To be consistent with themselves, they ought to understand the whole in a historical and literal sense: but this they perceive would involve them in too glaring absurdities.

This one might naturally suppose would have led them to consider the whole narrative in a different view; especially as thus it will bear a very consistent and uniform interpretation, and all the advantages and instructive uses of it be preserved. It reflects equal honour on our Saviour's character, and recommends him to our imitation as

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an excellent example of contentment, piety, humility and dutiful obedience to the will of God. It obviates the objections that have been brought against this part of sacred writ, and is in itself capable of a rational and solid vindication.

From this you will conclude we do not think it necessary to understand our Saviour's temptation, in the strictly literal sense, as a historical narration of a matter of fact; but as representing in a visionary and scenical manner, what happened in our Lord's mind, when he was retired into the wilderness, by fasting and prayer, to prepare himself for the great work upon which he was entering.

If we suppose Satan to have appeared to Jesus in a bodily shape, to
have

have conversed with him, to have made him the proposals here mentioned, and to be known by Christ; where is the mighty virtue and merit of rejecting his solicitations and offers? Who would not have done the like? We can scarce think any of the sons of men would have complied with such proposals, if personally made to them by such a being. It requires no small share of credulity to believe that Jesus was carried through the air from the wilderness, which was at a great distance from Jerusalem, into the holy city, and there set upon a pinnacle of the temple, and afterwards wafted back again through the air, by the same method of conveyance. Where, it may also be asked, is the mountain so exceeding high, that from it can be shewn

all

all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them?

Christ, we are told, was *in all points tempted as we are*. But who will say that our temptations are analogous to this? None but the most despicable enthusiasts pretend to a personal intercourse with Satan. Our temptations arise from the sollicitations of our appetites and passions within, and from the allurements of the world without us. And as Jesus was in all things made like unto his brethren of mankind, when he partook of flesh and blood, is it not most natural to suppose that his temptations proceeded from the same causes as ours. Being thus *touched with a feeling of our infirmities*, he was better fitted to have compassion on
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the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.

For these and other reasons, many worthy christians have been constrained to forsake the literal interpretation, and to seek a meaning less liable to objections, ridicule, and absurdity.—This they have imagined the method of explanation already mentioned to be. It is not difficult to suppose, in the circumstances wherein our Saviour then was, how all these things might have happened to him, and how the various thoughts here mentioned might spring up in his mind. That these are said to proceed from the devil, is only speaking according to the general style of the scripture language, the prevailing notion among the Jews, and the way
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S E R M O N III. 61

of speaking generally used by that people. Every thing wise, virtuous, and good, is said to proceed from God; because he is the greatest, wisest, and best of beings. On the other hand, every thing vile, base, and wicked, is said to come from the devil; because he was considered as the worst and most potent of all wicked and malicious beings. Thus all mankind are said to be the children of God, or the children of the devil, according as righteousness or wickedness prevails in their tempers and lives. For those very things which are said to be done by God, or the devil, we need seek for no other agents but men themselves.

It is easy to conceive how these several temptations might happen to
 Jesus,

Jesus, if we consider the circumstances in which he then was.

A little before this he had been baptized at Jordan, and had received without measure that spirit, by which he was enabled to prosecute his important enterprize, and work all his stupendous miracles. Luke introduces his account of the temptation thus—*Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the spirit into the wilderness.* Though he was thus overshadowed with power from on high, yet he was sensible of the arduous work that lay before him, and of the opposition and persecution he should meet with. He retired therefore for a time from the world, better to fit himself for his office, by
praying

praying to God for continued assistance, to finish gloriously the work to which he was called, and by meditating upon that conduct by which he should best sustain his character as the Saviour of the world, and be faithful unto death.

In this place, sequestered from the world, he remained for the space of forty days. During this time he was alone, unvisited by any human companion or friend; and he fasted from all food, having nothing to support his body, or refresh his spirits. His time was spent in those holy exercises, and that deep recollection of thought, which are a weariness to the flesh. No wonder that nature was now spent and fatigued. Well might he wish for a speedy deliverance from this gloomy
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and uncomfortable situation ; a situation from which, by an exertion of the power wherewith he was endued, he might be at once delivered. This would naturally lead to those temptations with which he was tried. The first of which was founded upon bodily and temporal wants. When his mind was oppressed with intense thinking, and his body pained with hunger, and he was at a distance from every place where he could have any refreshment, it might easily come into his thoughts to imagine, that if he was the beloved of God, as at his baptism was declared, he need not submit to undergo any hardships ; but insist that God should shew his love to him by supporting him even miraculously.—Want is a great temptation to murmur against God.

God. Hunger naturally tends to make persons peevish and fretful, and to put them upon the most expeditious method of supplying themselves. It is not impossible but to something of this infirmity Jesus might be inclined. How otherwise could he be said to be tempted or tried? Or where would have been the praise and glory of his having been tempted like as we are, and yet without sin?

Jesus knew himself to be possessed of the same power, by which afterwards he was able to feed many thousands with five loaves and two small fishes. The keenness of nature's cravings might suggest to him the exertion of this mighty power, for his own immediate support and ease. Thoughts are in-

F voluntary,

voluntary, and not entirely under any man's command. Bad ones will sometimes arise in the minds even of the best men. It is not the having but the giving encouragement to them, that is blameable and sinful. Immediately to check and suppress every thought of this kind, is an instance of great virtue, and an evidence of that piety and self command, to which few men attain.

This sublimity of goodness our Saviour was possessed of. He gave not the least encouragement to the suggestion, no not for a moment. With disdain and abhorrence, he instantly rejected the dishonourable thought. He would not express the least diffidence of his Father's goodness and care, nor employ

employ the power communicated for the discharge of his public office, for his own private gratification. He reasoned himself into a temper more suitable to his character, and the relation wherein he stood to God. Without indulging to the least murmuring, or repining of spirit, he expressed the fullest satisfaction in the will of his heavenly Father, and determined to rely upon his providence, and to wait relief from him. He knew that the circumstances in which he then was, had a great design, which he was desirous should be accomplished. *Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience, by the things which he suffered.* Such absolute resignation at the beginning of his mission, and so soon after he had been extraordinarily distinguished by

Heaven, might be of singular service to him. Without working a miracle, and turning the stones into bread, he trusted that his heavenly Father would provide for him.

Thus did Jesus learn obedience, resignation and patience, by the things which he suffered, at his very entrance upon his ministry. Thus was he disciplined and prepared to bear *the contradiction of sinners*, and all the reproaches and ill-usage he should afterwards meet with. Thus hath he given us an example of contentment and submission to the divine providence, in circumstances very distressing. Happy and honourable are those christians, who, like their sacred Master, excel in resignation, and whose minds are digni-
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fied with this highest ornament of religion, calm acquiescence in the divine will ! Unto God they look, unto God they *commit their cause*, knowing that *he careth for them.*

The manner in which this temptation is represented in the sacred history, is this. When Jesus was an hungered, the tempter, or the evil tempting thought, came to him, and said, *If thou be the Son of God*, as was in a distinguished manner declared at thy baptism, suffer no longer the pains of hunger, but *command that these stones be made bread.* Our Lord not only silenced and baffled the temptation, by the reflections of his mind, and the goodness of his heart, but also by recollecting a passage out of the holy

Scripture, wherein it is written, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* These words we find Deuteronomy chap. viii. ver. 3. and they refer to God's miraculous preservation of the Israelites in the wilderness. This was a passage very proper for our Saviour to reflect upon, as it was so applicable to his present circumstances. They intimate that man is not to live by bread alone, but by whatever method divine providence shall appoint, who can always find means for supporting his creatures. It is not therefore so necessary to provide food for the preservation of life, as to maintain a rational and religious trust in the exuberant goodness of God.

While

S E R M O N III. 71

While Jesus was in the wilderness, musing on the voice from heaven, which at his baptism proclaimed him to be the Son of God; and considering the extraordinary power with which he was invested, the thought might dart suddenly into his mind, that he should not continue there solitary and unknown, but make the most public and ostentatious display of his power and greatness. What method more likely to do this, than by performing something in the most public concourse of the people, that should greatly excite their wonder and amazement? Of this kind would be the throwing himself down from the height of the temple before the numerous crowd that were there assembled, and immediately rising up unhurt.

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But

But what would such a vain glorious exploit be, but at the same time distrusting and presuming upon, the divine regard to him? It would intimate a distrust of the testimony given to him at his baptism, and of the reality of the power conferred upon him. And it would be presuming on God's power to support him, in a vain and useless attempt.

The miracles which Jesus afterwards performed, were of a nature very different from this, and had always a beneficial and useful tendency. They were not wrought merely to excite astonishment in the spectators, or to aggrandize his own character. They were not wanton displays of an extraordinary power.

But

But the Son of God was incapable of harbouring an imagination so unworthy of his character. As soon as it arose, he dismissed the thought, and preserved his wisdom and his piety untainted. He better knew the purpose for which he was divinely commissioned. He never needlessly thrust himself into danger, that by a miracle God should preserve him from being destroyed or hurt.

This was the second temptation, which is thus described by the Evangelist. *And the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple; or in his own thoughts he might imagine himself in the city, and standing on the highest battlements of the temple.* When he was on that
stupendous

stupendous height, in the presence of a vast concourse of people below, he saith to him, *If thou be the Son of God, as the heavenly voice seemed to declare, cast thyself down from hence.* To such a thought he might be tempted, not only by considering the mighty power with which he was indued, but by this passage of Scripture recurring to his thoughts: *He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou shalt dash thy foot against a stone.*

No sooner was it formed, but Jesus rejected the unworthy suggestion. It was not in his power to prevent the intruding thought springing up in his mind: but what was in his power he did, by immediately discarding it.

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He also silenced the insinuating plea, by the remembrance of another passage of sacred Scripture, where it is written, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* The expression signifies, thou shalt not prove the Lord, either by acting otherwise than he has appointed, or by requiring proofs of his power and veracity, after such as are sufficient have already been given. Thou shalt not put his goodness, and the care of his providence, to the utmost proof and trial, presuming upon it to uphold and preserve thee in bold, dangerous, and unnecessary enterprizes.

This passage is quoted from Deut. vi. 16. and there appears a peculiar propriety in its application. It refers to the Israelites murmuring in the wilderness

wilderness against Moses for want of water. To whom Moses replied, *Why do ye tempt the Lord?* Why do you distrust and call in question his power and goodness, and require farther signs and proofs of them, after the evidences which he hath given? *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

Thus hath our Saviour shewn, that he would not employ his power of working miracles, in a subserviency to his own fancy and imagined glory, but to answer beneficial and important purposes to mankind. Thus are we instructed by him, not to apply general and conditional promises in Scripture, as if they were absolute and particular. We are farther taught by him, that no man should throw himself unnecessarily
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into danger, merely to try whether Providence will protect him or not. We may from hence learn, that we may rely upon God to keep us in all dangers, into which we are led by his providence; but that no man ought to tempt God, by running wilfully any presumptuous hazards. After the evidences God has given of his providential regard for those who serve him, let us not be continually distrusting his goodness and veracity, and calling for fresh proofs and stronger assurances; this is tempting of God; being dissatisfied with what he hath done, and questioning his future care and power.

The third and last temptation that offered itself to our Lord, was the aspiring after worldly power, glory,
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and interest, instead of supporting that moral, benevolent, and self-abasing design, for which he was sent into the world. If we attend to the circumstances in which Jesus then was, we may readily conceive in what manner such an imagination might arise in the thoughts of his heart. *When he was baptized, lo the heavens were opened unto him; and there came a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* In consequence of this he found himself full of all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and possessed of a power by which he was able to subdue all opposition and authority, and bring every power into captivity and obedience to himself.

The unattended, forsaken and disconsolate condition, wherein he was in
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the wilderness, and the mean appearance he had ever made in the world, might lead to an imagination of thus employing the power he had received from God. Nor can the most transient surmise of such a thought be considered as evil, or as casting the least blemish on our Saviour's most perfect character. It is only giving him an opportunity of exercising more exalted virtue, and shining with brighter lustre. That character is worthy of double honour, which resists the strongest temptations; and like gold, comes out of the furnace purified and refined.

Riches, honour, and power, are, to the children of men, the greatest of all temptations. But they had no influence upon him, who bore the character of
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the Son of God. He preferred the seemingly mean and ignoble work of being a preacher of righteousness, and a guide in the way of truth, to all the pomp of worldly grandeur, and the indulgences of luxury. With disdain and abhorrence he rejected the vile and impious suggestion. In this he appeared an illustrious, and almost singular example of meekness, humility, and lowliness of mind; *seeking not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him.* The thought, captivating as it might be to human pride, met not from him with the least entertainment; and though it was the most alluring, was spurned with indignation. A supreme reverence and affection to the will and service of God prevailed over every other purpose, and kept him steadfast and immovable in

in the obedience, which he owed to him, and him alone. He suffered nothing to come in competition with this. To him all the kingdoms and glory of this world were as nothing, and *less than nothing, and vanity*; especially when to purchase them, something must be done derogatory to the honour of God, and that worship and obedience which is his sole due. The appointment and authority of God were, with him, always unrivalled. From the beginning of his life it appears, that he sought not the honour that cometh from man, but that which cometh from God only. A life of integrity and goodness, spent in the service of God, and for the salvation of man, though attended with many sorrows and

G sufferings,

sufferings, was to him greater riches than all the treasures of the earth.

The history of this temptation runs thus:—*Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and in a moment of time sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

In his imagination he ascended an eminence, from whence he beheld this tempting prospect, and thought of the means by which he might make them all his own. If Jesus could have been swayed by ambitious views, the love of domination, and the pride of life; and would have exerted the great power with which

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which he was invested for acquiring these; all human force must have fallen before him, whom even the winds and the waves of the sea obeyed.

But this he knew was deviating from the purpose and design of God, and setting up his own will and a false glory, in opposition to his heavenly Father, to whom all should be obedient.

He knew that no one could serve two such masters; no one could serve God and mammon. With a proper warmth of indignation he dismissed the thought, saying, *Get thee behind me, Satan*; far be any such purpose or thought from me: hereby expressing both a detestation of the proposal, and a superiority over the thought. Never let me indulge the most distant idea of any such thing: *for it is written, Thou shalt*

worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Thus again he called in to his aid, the instructions of the divine law, and recollected a truth which is of an eternal nature, and obligatory on all intelligent creatures. God's right to our supreme regard and constant services, is indisputable and invariable.

Thus by our Saviour's example and precept, in the time of trial, we are taught to prefer before all things the service of God, and the purity of true religion. Compared with them, every worldly consideration is to be relinquished and despised. The gain of the whole world, was it possible, is to be rejected, rather than willingly make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Thus may we learn of Christ,

to be *meek and lowly in heart*, and to despise that love of the world, which is inconsistent with the love of the Father.

From what has been said, we see how this part of scripture may rationally be explained, without supposing any personal intercourse between our Lord and Satan; or that it was in the power of this spirit of wickedness, to waft Jesus through the air as he pleased; or that he should propose to him, to renounce the true worship of God, and fall down and adore him. The whole appears greatly to the honour of our Lord's character; and may be of great use to his disciples in supporting their faith and directing their conduct. Many objections, of great force and weight, against this part of the sacred history,

when understood in a literal sense, are by this interpretation removed; and the whole reconciled to reason and propriety. At the same time all the practical and beneficial inferences from it are preserved. We see whence our greatest dangers and temptations arise, and are taught by our Saviour's example how we are to resist and conquer them:— Let us *go and do likewise*. Then shall we pass through the wilderness of this world, as our Saviour did through that near Jordan, with safety and with honour. And when *Christ who is our life shall appear* hereafter, *then shall we also appear with him in glory*, and be conducted into the possession of life and blessedness eternal. Which God of his infinite mercy grant.

PRAYER.

P R A Y E R.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful God,
 who didst send thy well-beloved Son into
 this world, not only to suffer and die for
 us, but also to leave us an example that
 we might follow his steps! enable us to
 imitate so fair, so exalted, and divine
 a character. May we imitate his piety and
 devotion to thee our heavenly Father, esteem-
 ing it our meat and drink to do thy will.
 May no temptation ever prevail with us to
 neglect or refuse that worship and obedience
 which is due to thee alone. — May this
 sentiment be ever present to our minds,
*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him
 only shalt thou serve.* May the consideration
 of thy universal providence, and kind
 attention to the welfare and happiness of
 all thy creatures, and the recollection of thy

past goodness to ourselves, engage us, as it did our gracious Redeemer, at all times cheerfully to put our trust and confidence in thee, for the supply of all our wants, and for the removal or happy termination of all our calamities and afflictions. May neither riches, honours nor ambition ever cause us to desert our duty, or do those things which our consciences disapprove, or are contrary to the precepts of our holy religion.—Looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, may we be steadfast and immoveable in the practice of pure and undefiled religion, so that hereafter we may be admitted to those mansions of pure and unmixed felicity, which our Saviour is gone before to prepare for all those that sincerely love and faithfully obey thee.

Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N IV.

ON BROTHERLY LOVE.

PSALM cxxxiii. 1.

*Behold how good and how pleasant it is
for brethren to dwell together in unity.*

THUS spoke the Psalmist; and
thus will every one speak, who
considers the amiableness and excellency
of a meek and quiet spirit, and the
innumerable felicities that are spread
through the world, by the cultivation
of amity and peace. In the larger
community of mankind, the mischiefs
arising

arising from enmity, strife, and variance, may not strike us so forcibly, or appear so destructive. If we confine our views to the lesser societies, into which mankind are divided; the odiousness of a spirit of discord and dissension will appear more conspicuous, and its consequences more fatal. *Every kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself, shall not stand.*

On the contrary, *behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* How comfortably do all concerns between them go on! With what advantage are all domestic affairs conducted! How are their mutual cares alleviated, and their troubles diminished! How are their
minds

minds mutually refreshed, and their lives solaced, by the agreeable intercourses of conversation, and the sweet fellowship of reciprocal good will ! Undissembled love actuates every breast; the tenderest sympathy of affection reigns in every heart; the kindest offices of friendship are their continual delight; the law of kindness dwells on their lips; cheerfulness adorns their countenance; contentment appears in all their ways.

Peace gives a relish to all other temporal enjoyments, which lose their worth when mingled with the bitterness of strife. It makes society, and family connections, to be the most desirable blessing mankind can know on earth. It gives life quite another aspect,
than

than it would otherwise have, and adds to its duration, as well as happiness. The answer to the enquiry, *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days that he may see good?* is this: *Let him depart from evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it.* It transforms men into the temper of heaven, and the image of God. In the celestial mansions there is nothing that offends or disturbs. All there is harmony and love, mutual complacency and delight. Blessed are the lovers and makers of peace, *for they shall be called the children of God*, who is not the author of confusion, but of order; the father of mercy, and the God of peace.

But is that unity, peace and brotherly love, which is so good and pleasant to behold,

behold, to be confined within our own walls? Or does it not relate to the various societies of mankind, and the several distinct relations in which they stand to each other? Concerning this lovely grace I am satisfied we cannot entertain so narrow and contracted an idea as to imagine it refers only to those, who dwell together in the same house. Beginning with that harmony and peace, which should subsist in every individual family, we will thence extend it to our relations, neighbours, and acquaintance, and all with whom we have any intercourse; till we comprehend the enlarged society of christians, and the greater community of mankind.

*Behold, how good and pleasant it is
for those to live together in unity, love,
and*

and concord, who dwell together in the same house, and are engaged by the closest ties of family connection. To preserve family peace and love, ought to be the studious endeavour of its several members. Next to the common blessings of life needful for its support, this of all other things is the most desirable and necessary. To live in peace and quietness in our own families, is a thing essentially necessary to the comfort of social life. Without this, it is absolutely impossible any real bliss can be enjoyed, however liberally the bounties of Providence may be possessed. *Better is a little, with the fear of the Lord; than great treasure, and trouble therewith.*
—*Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is; than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.*
—*Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith;*

*therewith; than a house full of sacrifices,
with strife.*

Where there is not peace and agreement in the house, and amity and kind affection between the several members of a family; it is not likely there will be much satisfaction and comfort to be found in any one bosom. They who suffer peevish and irascible passions to throw a family into distraction, shew little regard to the enjoyment of their own lives, or that of others. When quarrels and discords prevail, between those who should be of one heart and of one soul, farewell in that house to every thing lovely and gracious. Where any can with repeated pleasure gratify their own pride, by rioting in an arbitrary and passionate dominion, humanity
itself

itself must be trampled under foot, and both virtue and religion thereby become sufferers.

There can scarcely be a more disagreeable subject to enlarge upon, than domestic feuds and quarrels. Yet as they most deeply wound the felicity of human life, are most injurious to religion, in the heads of families; and as they are likely to do more harm to the minds of children, than will be equivalent to the good produced by pious instructions at other times; for these reasons, coming so directly in our way they have thus far been taken notice of.

Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is, for brethren and kindred according

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ing to the flesh, to live in unity and love.—It hath in all countries been expected, that they who are so nearly connected by nature and blood, should cultivate a spirit of good-will towards each other, and with harmonized affections live together in peace and friendship. The ties of affinity were certainly designed, by the common Parent of the universe, to be productive of much kindness amongst his offspring, and to be the source of mutual harmony, and endearing affection. There should be a community of interest, and a sympathy of heart, between those, who are as it were flesh of one flesh, and bone of one bone.

The principles of benevolence and love, which are implanted in every breast,

breast, and from which the purest felicities of life proceed, operate more strongly within the narrow sphere of a family and relations, than in the larger circle of mankind. The reason of which is plain. No one's abilities can extend to the wants of all mankind; we are better acquainted with the necessities of relations, with whom we have frequent intercourse. In this case, every one in his distress and affliction, better knows where to apply for pity and relief, than if he was left to the charity of the world at large. A multiplicity of objects, with equal claims, would often distract the mind of the charitable; and give to others, a pretence to neglect them all.

Brotherly affection, is supposed always to subsist among those, who stand in
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this near relation to one another; and to be the cement of mutual endearment and friendship. The charities of father, son, and brother, should be venerated and regarded by all. Where two objects solicit our compassion and assistance, the ties of relationship direct where, in the disposal of our charity, the preference ought to be given; except that preference hath been forfeited by ungrateful and unworthy conduct. This shews that *brethren* should *dwell together in unity*.

Let us extend our view from the particular families of the earth, and take in the neighbourhood in which we dwell, and all our fellow-christians, with whom we have any intercourse.

Behold, how good and pleasant it is, for

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those

those who are children of the same Father in heaven, and brethren in Christ, to live in peace, unity, and charity. What can be more disagreeable, than to see trifling differences set the hearts of neighbours one against another? to have all friendly correspondence between them at an end? to see them studying each other's vexation and injury, and striving more and more to exasperate one another's passions? By this means more pleasure is taken in gratifying personal resentment, than in acts of kindness, or being friendly and serviceable to each other. Because persons in the same neighbourhood cannot think alike in some particulars, is this a reason why all friendly intercourse should cease, and that they should treat one another with all the malignity of rancour and hatred?

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The whole strain of the New Testament shews, that it was the desire of Jesus and his Apostles, that all who embraced the christian profession, should be patterns of virtue in this respect. Though they were intermingled in society with Jews and idolaters, who greatly opposed, hated, and persecuted them, yet they were by a suitable conduct to shew that they were animated by the kindest dispositions. By the exercise of general benevolence and love, they were to evidence that it is one great design of christianity to cultivate and improve these good affections. How much more incumbent then must it be upon christians, though there may be some variations amongst them in opinion, and modes of worship, to be friendly and peaceable in their conduct

to one another, who are not only brethren in nature, but also brethren in Christ! How imperfectly are they instructed in the doctrine of Jesus, who have not learned to *forbear one another in love, and to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace!* Persons of violent and bigotted principles and passions, who will not suffer those who differ from them in opinion to live quietly, and who are continually fomenting quarrels and divisions between neighbours, are as bad christians as they are bad members of society. They deserve at once our pity, our contempt, and our censure.

If any in the ministerial office are of this temper and character, they are worthy of double blame; for they
ought

ought to know and practise better. They should be lovers and preachers of peace, and love and charity, in meekness instructing those who hear them. They should endeavour to correct the prejudices, to moderate the passions, to calm the resentments, and properly direct the zeal of their fellow-christians ; that they may diffuse one general spirit of benignity and concord, forbearance and love, amongst all that call on the name of the Lord Jesus. But if instead of this, carried away by an ignorant, intemperate, and unrighteous zeal, they raise animosities, encourage disputes, perpetuate variances, and whet men's angry spirits against each other, there is no character and office they less deserve, than that which they assume, of being preachers of the Gospel of peace.

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Let us carry our view one step farther, and consider how good and pleasant a thing it is, for the whole human race, whom God hath made of one blood, to live in peace and unity.

To promote peace on earth, and good will amongst men, is the design and honour of the Gospel. It permits no narrow party interests to contract the best affections of our nature. It is not only to the *household of faith* that we are to do good, but, *as we have opportunity, unto all men*. The spirit of christian love is of this wide extent, and comprehends within its scope universal benevolence. It speaks to us as partakers of the same common nature, as members of the great community of mankind, as subject to the same passions
and

and wants, and as standing in need of each other's compassion and assistance.

According to our Saviour's interpretation of the precept, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour*, every man with whom we have any concern, and to whom we can be useful, is to be considered as the neighbour, whom we should love as ourselves. The Apostle's exhortation is, *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.* Which words (by the way) suppose that in some cases it cannot be done, and is not therefore required. All open acts of violence and injustice may, consistently with the highest regard to religion, be resisted. They who are the authors of injury, are answerable for the offence; and not they who in a wise and equitable way,

way, guard themselves against it. Thus we may do all that the Gospel requires to preserve peace, without suffering ourselves to be trampled upon by pride or by oppression.

To excite our diligent and constant endeavours after this unity and peace, I would represent more particularly how good and pleasant a thing it is.

Were we to consider every blessing and felicity either of a social or domestic nature, that can fall to the lot of mankind in this world, we may truly say they all flow from this amiable spirit as their spring, and that without it they can never be enjoyed. If a man is of a turbulent, litigious, uneasy, revengeful temper, what happiness, or comfort,

comfort, or peace of mind can he ever hope to enjoy? If he is continually disturbing, vexing and injuring his neighbours, and continually receiving from them in return, injuries, affronts, and molestations; how wretched and miserable must his life be! And if all the world were of this disposition, what an execrable habitation would it then be! How well then might that be said of every one, which was said of one son of perdition, *It had been better for him he had never been born!*

On the contrary, if every one was to desire and endeavour to live in peace, and to cultivate and cherish in his breast those dispositions and affections that make for peace, would not the happiness of the world be very great?
greater

greater than ever yet hath been experienced, greater almost than can now be expressed? Many of the severest calamities and miseries that now infest the world, would never have been known or heard of. For more and worse evils arise from the injuriousness of men to each other, than ever come to them in the course of providence. When the perfection of human happiness is described, it is by the introduction of universal peace and goodwill. *The nations shall beat their swords into plow shares, and their spears into pruning hooks. The lion and the lamb shall feed and lie down together, and they shall not hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain.*

By living in peace, friendship, and love with each other, men would be
much

much more comfortable in their families, than without this it is ever to be expected they will be. That unity, love, and cordial affection should always subsist between the members of a family, which will make it a calm and peaceful retreat from the discontents and distractions they may meet with in the world at large. Such a conduct would contribute greatly to the comfort of all the members of it, and add a very peculiar relish to all their enjoyments. It would alleviate their afflictions and their cares, and even make those toils easy, which might otherwise be looked upon as insupportable. The mutual sympathy and tenderness which they express towards one another, would be as balm poured into a wound, or as oil of gladness to refresh the heart. No-
thing

thing can be more unhappy, than for a house to be divided against itself: every thing delectable must be banished thence. What satisfaction can a man expect to have, when his foes are those of his own household?

If disagreements and quarrels arise between him and a neighbour, or a stranger, any farther intercourse between them may perhaps easily be avoided. But a man cannot easily withdraw himself from those of his own family. The troubles and vexations he meets with from others, may be doubly compensated by the soothing caresses and affectionate kindness of his nearest relatives and dearest friends; but when all is tumult and distraction at home, where shall he fly for refuge? where find a place of rest?

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It is not easy to say how great an addition a peaceful, kind and obliging behaviour will make to the happiness of private families. Every one must confess that the sweetest joys of life, are those of a domestic nature. Here is true enjoyment, real felicity, no forced smiles, no affected gaiety. The pleasure arising hence is great, the advantage unspeakable. Were they on whom it principally depends determined to please, and to be easily pleased, their bliss, as far as it springs from family connections, would be greater than can be expressed by words.

The temper and conduct which hath been recommended, is that alone by which we shall live worthy of our character as the children of God, and
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the disciples of Jesus Christ. The God whom we worship, is the God of love and peace, abounding in the most generous expressions of kindness towards the children of men. The Gospel we profess, is a constitution of grace and mercy, manifesting the greatest good-will towards us. The temper which it requires from every one, is that of benevolence and charity, compassion, peace and friendship. The examples which it recommends to our imitation, are those in which the most amiable dispositions prevail, wherein kindness and love govern their whole conduct, and from whose breasts every thing troublesome and contentious, passionate and revengeful, is banished. A meek and quiet spirit is particularly recommended as of great price in the
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fight of God, and what therefore must be the temper of his children and acceptable servants. *The wisdom which is from above is pure and peaceable; gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God; but the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.*

This is to act consistently with our character and relation as brethren, children of the same common parent, united by the sacred bonds of one common and everlasting interest. This is to walk worthy of our holy vocation as the disciples of Christ, and heirs and expectants of the same glorious immortality. Nothing but this temper of love and concord can make religion

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flourish,

flourish, and human society a blessing. This will sooth the rugged paths of life, and be a great alleviation under the necessary evils of this mortal state.

If, instead of irritating and envying one another, christians were to *bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ*; how much happier would this world be, than now it is! Of how little importance are the several things wherein we differ from each other in opinion, compared with the weighty matters of the law wherein the various sects and parties of christians are agreed! How little would the happiness of the world be promoted by an entire uniformity and agreement in these lesser matters, compared with what it might be by the universal prevalence

S E R M O N I V . 115

valence of mutual love, forbearance and condescension ! It is to the alienation of their hearts from each other, and their want of charity, that we are to ascribe the various mischiefs and miseries which have so long continued, so widely spread, and so cruelly harrassed the christian world.

When will the time come that christians will lay a restraint upon their passions, and be careful not to molest and offend one another ? When will the time come that different churches will receive one another, not to doubtful disputations, but as Christ hath received us all, to the glory of God ? When will it be that *the strong will bear with the infirmities of the weak, and every one please his neighbour for his good*

to edification? When will it be that he who eateth, and he who eateth not, will cease to despise and judge one another; and that he who regardeth the day, and he who regardeth it not, shall with the same spirit of piety and love give thanks to the Lord?

Had the spirit I am recommending been always properly cultivated, innumerable mischiefs in the christian world would have been prevented, and the happiness of our own nation in particular greatly promoted. Then that might in every age be said of the disciples of Christ which was said in the first, Behold these christians, how they love one another! We should not then speak of it as a thing extraordinary and wonderful, *Behold, how*

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*good and how pleasant a thing it is for
brethren to dwell together in unity!*

Now may the God of patience and
consolation, the lover of peace and
author of concord, grant you to be like
minded and affected one towards another,
after the example of Jesus Christ, *that
ye may with one mind and one mouth,
glorify God even the Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ.*

IV. S E R M O N .

good and best pleasant a thing it is for
 brethren to dwell together in unity.

Now may the God of patience and
 consolation, the lover of peace, and
 author of concord, grant you to be like
 minded and affected one towards another
 after the example of Jesus Christ, who
 he was with one mind and one mouth,
 glorifying God even the Father of our Lord
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S E R M O N V.

MAN IGNORANT WHAT EVENTS CONDUCE
TO MOST TO HIS TRUEST HAPPINESS.

ECCLESIASTES vi. 12.

*For who knoweth what is good for a man
in this life, all the days of his vain life
which he spendeth as a shadow?*

THIS question is not to be understood, as implying in it any thing sceptical or irreligious, as if there were not certain duties to be discharged, and certain affections to be cultivated, which are plainly and undeniably good for man. The great distinction to be

made is this: we know what is good for us internally; that is, in respect to the state and temper of the soul; but we know not what is so externally; that is, respecting the state of the body, its measure of health, or affliction, or as to worldly circumstances and condition.

The enquiry in the text is not to be so interpreted, as if it left us no certainty about what we ought to pursue; but involved us, concerning the search of our truest interest, in universal doubting. It is plain from the context, and from the general strain of this wise and pious author, that no such thing was intended by it. We know that it is constantly, and eternally good for man, to cherish in his soul all the principles

principles of virtue, and that with the less deviation he lives under their influence, the less blameable will his conduct be in his own sight, and in the sight of God, angels, and men. We know that it is ever good for man, to believe in the existence of God, the almighty creator of all things, and the gracious preserver of mankind; good to love and venerate his transcendently great and excellent perfections; and to endeavour habitually to act, as under his influence, and in his presence.— It must ever be good for man, to keep it continually in his thoughts, that he is daily, hourly, momentarily depending upon God; and that all happiness belonging to mind or body, is derived from him, and can be continued only by his gracious providence; which
also

also may lessen or increase them. It must also be good for man, invariably, and under all circumstances, to obey the known will of his heavenly Father; and not only without prejudice or partiality, but thankfully and gladly to receive the instruction of his word, and to observe it as a dutiful child with readiness, and with delight; and never in opposition to it to encourage a froward temper, or vicious inclination. It is undoubtedly good for each of us, to yield ourselves in holy obedience to the precepts of our divine Instructor; to be unswervingly just and honest in our dealings and transactions with men; and to do to others as we would expect them to do to us. It is good for us, and every man, to value the testimony of a good conscience
more

more than gold—good for us to buy the truth at any rate, but to sell it afterwards at no price, and to keep every sensual and bodily appetite in subjection to the higher powers of reason and conscience.

Is there no certainty of our continuing long in the possession of the things of this world? It must then be our interest to look to something beyond them, to see if there are not enjoyments better suited to our immortal part; and if there are, to pursue them as their importance deserves.

I have said this much to shew that we are not altogether in the dark with respect to internal good, or what is and ever will be so to the soul, let things in
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other respects be circumstanced as they will. *The Lord hath shewed thee O man, in this respect, what is good, and what the Lord doth require of thee.* The most uninformed cannot be so ignorant as not to know, that it is good for all men *to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God.* These things are good works, and are undoubtedly good and profitable unto men; they lead to present peace, and terminate in everlasting felicity.

I proceed to consider what the words of the text more directly point out, and that is in regard to external things, no man knows what is good for him. There are certain things which it is natural for mankind to consider as enjoyments, and others which it is natural

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natural for them universally to look upon as evil. Yet this natural and common opinion is often not right, if remote tendencies and consequences are taken into the account. No man knows what is best for him, even in respect to health, or worldly prosperity, or the continuance of life: neither does he know what degrees of ease and success are best for himself, his friends, or his country.

Considered in a moral and religious view, and in reference to another world, no man knows whether uninterrupted health is better for him, than if it was mixed with sickness.

Health is a natural blessing—it is the parent of a large family of comforts,
and

and happy are those who improve it to religious and valuable purposes. Most men would be ready to say, if we know not that health is good for us, we know not that any thing is so. What are all the external gifts of Providence without it? Tasteless and unpleasant. It is health which gives cheerfulness to the sun, verdure to the earth, blossoms and fruits to the trees, beauty and colouring to the flowers, and enables man to walk amongst them with delight.—Health is the guardian of his freedom and liberty—it keeps him in a capacity of pursuing what is most desirable to him—of prosecuting business, visiting friends, and pleasing himself by various ways, both at home and abroad. Whereas the removal of it, is immediately an inactive languishing
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of soul and body, generally attended with pain, which brings on confinement, and abridges that natural liberty of life which belongs to it in a good and sound state.

All this is true; and yet we cannot say of any man living, that it is for his good, as a moral and immortal being, that he should be always in health. This relates only to the welfare of the body, to which the welfare of the soul is a far superior concern. So giddy and thoughtless are the passions of men, that we know the former frequently interferes and clashes with the latter. While men are in full strength, and free from afflictions, they are apt to be thoughtless of futurity, and to live in such a manner,

as unfits them for death, and its important consequences. Whereas on the other hand, threatening diseases are such kind of providences, as speak very powerfully to all men. Their warnings come with great authority; with such authority, that they will make serious and good impressions, after the counsel and advice of friends have long been offered in vain. It must indeed be acknowledged, afflictions themselves do not always produce those beneficial effects, that might reasonably be expected from them. There are many who, in this respect, have been great sufferers, whose tempers and moral dispositions have not been improved to any good or valuable purposes. Nay, some perhaps have by them become more hardened in their iniquitous practices.

practices. At the same time it must be acknowledged, numbers by these means have been restored to the neglected and forsaken paths of wisdom and duty. Among the several methods which our merciful Creator makes use of, for the moral improvement of his rational creatures, there is reason to believe, those of an afflictive nature are as frequently useful as any other whatever. While under the discipline of these means, many have first felt those powerful convictions of conscience, and those pious resolutions excited, which were the happy beginnings of a religious and virtuous life. There is no reason to doubt but a certain share of bodily afflictions, being inflicted upon mankind, as the wise and gracious Author of providence sees fit, is much better

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for them, considering the destructive paths into which they are in danger of being hurried by their passions, than if they were permitted to live all their time without pain, and undisturbed by any diseases. These, generally, rouse persons of a religious disposition, to greater activity and zeal, in the discharge of their duty; and often more strongly convince them, than any thing else could do, of the folly of placing their happiness unduly, upon transitory enjoyments.

The use we should make of what has been said concerning health and afflictions, is this, that as the first is desirable by us, for ourselves, relatives, and friends; so we know the latter, if not desirable, are useful. And therefore

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fore what portion of the one, or the other, may be best for us, considering ourselves as incompetent judges, we should dutifully refer to God. This is certainly the rational temper—this is acting the wise and good part. And there are many indisputable arguments to recommend it. Health we may think particularly eligible, when it would peculiarly expose us to temptation—and we may be extremely solicitous to remove an affliction which is sent in mercy.

Many and various are the blessings conferred upon us by God, in this life. Among these, in common language we never number afflictions; yet when their moral and divine uses are attended to, we may rationally attribute them

to the same God, who causes his sun to shine upon us, and who supplies our returning wants by his indulgent providence. We are apt to be too earthly minded in our thoughts and views; these come to spiritualize our affections. — We are prone to be too careless in health; these rouse. — Unadmonished, we are ready to be forgetful of death; these remind us what we are, and what we shall shortly be. The ends they are calculated to answer, are thus exceedingly valuable. If harsh and severe means are thought eligible when the body is in danger, and when no others so likely to save it can be proposed; why should we complain of the afflictions of Providence, when we may be satisfied, fully satisfied, they are designed to promote such valuable purposes. Of this

this we may be assured upon scriptural authority, Heb. xii. 7. *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?* We are infinitely indebted to God, when he timely rebukes us for our moral improvement: and we should pray even that we might be exercised with afflictions, if needful, rather than suffered unwarned, unadmonished, to pursue that conduct, which finally leadeth to everlasting destruction.

As to that state or condition in the world which would be best for us, no man is a competent judge; because he is attentive only to what strikes his passions; and in such a condition as hath many things eligible in it, he sees

not its dangers; or if he doth, passeth them over in a very partial manner.—Nay, it may be truly said, that at a great distance, and when biased by his inclination another way, he cannot see things as they really are. This is the true reason, why men are apt so childishly, and weakly, to think their own condition worse than that of others; when oftentimes if they were allowed to make the exchange, they would be desirous in a short time to take up their own burdens, and be glad to quit that situation, for which before they envied others. In respect to riches, and the worldly advantages belonging to them; many are ready to say in their hearts, These must be good;—had we but as much of these as some persons have, how delightfully should we enjoy ourselves!

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selves! How generously would we relieve the poor, and how happy would we make our relations and friends about us! I doubt not there are some such persons, who in affluent circumstances would be public blessings. But I much question whether there is one in the whole world, who, if not content with what is sufficient to supply the chief and principal wants of a virtuous life, would really be so, if he was possessed of a thousand times more than he has; for this plain reason, that of imaginary wants, such as pride and covetousness suggest, there is no end.

It must be allowed by most sober and thinking persons, that where there is a prevailing taste for sensual pleasures and licentiousness, there is reason to

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believe

believe riches and honours, if conferred upon them, would be grossly abused to the injury of the possessors: yet it is probable many of them would be ready to say, Would not these, if Providence were to commit them to us, be a blessing in our hands? To whom it might be said in reply, they might, or they might not be so. If you were never intrusted with these, you cannot tell how the snares and temptations which attend them might influence you. Can you say that with what you have received, you do the good that is easily in your power to do? If not, how do you know that a larger portion would not also be abused?

This is certain, that many who lived temperately before they came to the possession

possession of an opulent fortune, have afterwards become debauchees; that several who did not appear covetous in a moderate station, have certainly been so upon a large increase of wealth; that after such accessions, there has commonly been observed an accession of pride to attend them; and, to mention only one thing more, that a sense of religion, which not only seemed to be, but was really cultivated, when in a lower condition, has, upon advancing to a higher one, been thrown aside, as not genteel enough for their company in a more elevated rank. Notorious it is, that such changes for the worse in a religious sense, have followed changes for the better, as to temporal circumstances. If then it appears evident,

evident, that in point of temporal advantages and honours, we know not what is best for us, we ought to rest satisfied with the disposing providence of the Divine Being. If we have not the riches and grandeur of this world, is this a reason why we should not thankfully praise and love the gracious Author of our being, who has called us to virtue and to glory? All the boasted trophies and spoils of this world are soon snatched away. The glitter which is upon them, and the gaze of weak minds which they occasion, are very deceitful and vain. They are nearly allied to intoxicating luxuries and pleasures. It is no unusual thing to see large estates sacrificed to the gratification of particular lusts, to the lust of gaming, the lust of ambition,

or

or to some others of the most pernicious or hurtful kind.

These reflections should induce us in our several situations, to study religious contentment; to commit our way unto the Lord, and to trust in him; not doubting, but if we persevere in well doing, however we are circumstanced as to this world, he will finally bring to pass that which we wish, or ought the most to wish for, the consummation of our felicity in a future state. The paths of life, which exhibit the most pomp and splendour, are not the safest and easiest to walk in, for those who seek for an heavenly inheritance. Their sparkling glitter confounds the sight of the soul, and betrays its judgment into numerous errors.

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If we apply this observation to the consideration of life itself, the prime of God's blessings to us in this world, it holds equally true. No man knows beforehand, what in this respect is good for him; whether it be upon the whole better for him to live a longer or shorter time in this present state of existence. The love of life and self-preservation, is an instinct so strongly implanted in our natures, that nothing can overcome it; unless reason is disordered by the gloom of melancholy. *Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath, will he give for his life.* Every man may lawfully and commendably *desire life, and love many days that he may see good*; and yet in this respect, he may not in all cases choose that which is best for him, as to this world,

world, or the next. In the course of providence, events may turn out so as to make him groan, being burdened with the weight of life, and the evils it brings. His riches may *take to themselves wings and flee away*, and poverty and want may come upon him, as a strong man armed. His health may be wasted, and pain and sickness make him full of tossings to and fro night and day;—his friends may become unkind, his relations estranged from him, and his bitterest enemies those of his own house;—temptations may invade and overpower his integrity; vice and impiety take possession of the soul, in which religion and virtue once eminently flourished: he who at one time did honour to his christian profession, and was *not far from the kingdom of heaven,*

heaven, may become a disgrace to humanity itself, and a *vessel of wrath fitted for destruction*. Such unhappy reverses there have frequently been ; and no man can be certain, that none of these things may happen to himself.

This shews, that though fond affection, and the principles of nature may prevent our ever choosing death in an early period, for ourselves, our relations, or our friends ; yet it may come in great kindness, to prevent a long detail of miseries and woes, which unquestionably were foreseen by the omniscient Author of providence, though not by us. Mercy, grounded upon such knowledge, may often give death his commission. Thus the righteous are sometimes taken away from
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the evil to come, and enter into peace; and at other times are continued in life, till with many sorrows, their grey hairs are brought unto the grave.

Let us improve well the portion of time that is allotted us, and leave it, as after all our solicitude it must be left, to the all-disposing providence of God, to determine when we shall be gathered to our fathers.

Thus as no man knows what share of health, or sickness, of pain, or freedom from it, would, all things considered, be best for him; so if he was to spend his life, in consulting the wisest men of all nations on this head, he would not find them able to give him any particular information. Justly
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they might say, This is to be learnt from the providence of God, as your lives move on, and in no other manner.

If he was next to ask what degree of worldly prosperity would be best for him? they would be able only to resolve him by the like general answer—God knows, but we know not. Or whether it would be best for him to live a few or many years? in the same manner must they reply.

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O LORD GOD, whose never failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and in earth, and who art the author of every good and perfect gift; we submit ourselves to the disposal of that wisdom which cannot err, and to the care of that goodness which is unchangeable and everlasting. Lead us whither thou pleasest; place us in what circumstances thou shalt judge proper: we would do thy whole will with fidelity and pleasure; we would bear thy whole will with submission and patience. Defend us, O gracious Father, from every real evil; confer upon us every needful good; may all events conspire to the improvement and establishment of our

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virtue, and may we be conducted by thine unerring hand, through all the changes of this mortal life, and finally admitted to the everlasting habitations of the just, which thou hast promised to thy faithful servants by Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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S E R M O N VI.

ON THE SUPERIOR IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVING
THE MIND, TO ADORNING THE BODY.

I PETER iii. 3, 4.

*Whose adorning—let it be the hidden man
of the heart, in that which is not
corruptible, even the ornament of a
meek and quiet spirit, which is in the
sight of God of great price.*

THE inspired author of this epistle
endeavours, by the rules and di-
rections interspersed through it, to
amend and refine the hearts of his
readers by the most excellent and useful

religious and moral instructions, for the wise conduct and regulation of their lives.

The great pains which he frequently had observed taken about external things, particularly in adorning the body and setting it forth to the greatest advantage, by the studied ornaments of apparel and dress, led St. Peter in this chapter to direct the attention of those to whom he wrote, to things of an internal nature, that were more excellent and important; that rather than the body, they might be excited to adorn the heart and temper. The former hath its value, and by regarding and beautifying it, we may recommend ourselves to the notice and affection of our fellow-creatures; but the latter is of much higher value, and by improving and ornamenting it with

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with the virtues of the christian life, we shall not only be approved of men, but secure the love and acceptance of God.

From this passage, in the first place we learn, that in regard to regulation and ornament, the greatest pains should be taken with the frame and temper of our minds. Far would I be from insinuating that our bodies are unworthy of our care and concern. No one who knows any thing of the world, or of human nature, can be so void of sense as to imagine, that we ought not in respect to our outward appearance, to render ourselves agreeable to them among whom we live. Too great a disconformity from the modes and customs of the times and places

where we live, as to the article of dress and outward appearance, favours more of affectation and pride, than of humility and good sense. There is a neatness and cleanliness of apparel, that is proper and necessary to be regarded by all. There is also a richness and elegance of cloathing, that is becoming and commendable in those whose situation and circumstances in life can easily afford it. Coarse and mean attire, and a neglect of the art of dress, may be in them an error justly meriting condemnation. Reason and religion equally allow, that there is a degree of respect which our bodies may justly claim, and a degree of ornament which may be bestowed upon them, without any room for censure. Nothing in this discourse is intended to be said against
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any thing of this kind that is decent and becoming; suitable to a person's worldly condition, and within the bounds of modesty; for this is by St. Paul allowed to those *professing godliness*, at the same time that he discourages what is immodest, and betrays a vain and vicious mind.

But to make the ornamenting our bodies a very principal concern, and to be perpetually employed this way, to the neglect of our minds; is to the last degree ridiculous, and the strongest proof of a levity and weakness of understanding. It is to bestow much pains and expence in paint and gilding, while we pay no regard to the strength and stability of the building; or to have much in an edifice for show, and little

or nothing for use. They that are guilty of this folly, the inspired author in this chapter addresses without any reserve, and directs them to that moral culture, to that adorning of the temper, which will render them the most amiable in christian societies, and the greatest ornament to the christian world. *Whose adorning—let it be the hidden man of the heart*, that is, the temper and disposition of the mind. To this your principal attention and care should be directed, as this would make them truly amiable and lovely, reflect the greatest lustre and honour upon their character, and bring the highest credit and reputation to their religion. This is an adorning which will be sure to make every one possessed of it, esteemed and beloved. While all others are
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mutable and tranfient, and derive their worth from imagination and fancy, the taſte of the time and the faſhion of the country, this adorning is in itſelf truly valuable, continues immutably the ſame, and is equally admired and loved, at all times and in all countries.

While the adventitious ornaments of the body are not neglected, our principal concern ought to be to have our ſouls adorned and beautified with the graces of the chriſtian life. While we are allowed to keep our worldly affairs in good order, our thoughts ſhould be the moſt anxiously employed, about the regulation of our moral diſpoſitions.—)
On theſe, not only our character depends, but alſo in a great meaſure our felicity. The happineſs or miſery of
life

life is not so much constituted, from what passes without, as what passes within us. If the affections are in a state of distraction, external endowments will be of but little avail to make us happy in ourselves, and still less to render us agreeable and pleasing to others, or to make us respected and beloved. For, though for their own interest some may be found, who will flatter and submit to our humours and passions, yet even these can never inwardly approve and cordially love. So that if we have any regard to the voice of wisdom, it will direct us to be principally concerned, about the cultivation of our understanding, and the government of our passions. For how insignificant the fairest outward form, and the exactest decorum in dress, if the

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the mind is left unimproved, and the inward features are distorted; if there is in the soul every thing unlovely and displeasing?

What is the material part of our nature, in comparison with that which is immaterial and rational? It is the latter only that is, properly speaking, capable of improvement, and whose figure and appearance in life depends upon ourselves, and may be raised to almost any degree of excellence. And surely we cannot help thinking that one great design of our being placed in this state of trial, is to improve and better our own spirits. To have our breasts inspired with just sentiments of religion and virtue; and to have our minds formed to sobriety and goodness,

ness, is, or certainly ought to be, a matter of the first concern with us. Our opinions, our passions, and our pursuits may be such, as will certainly and unavoidably make us miserable: and on the contrary they may be so governed, that we may live in the favour of God, in the esteem of our neighbours, and in the possession of ourselves. *He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his own spirit, than he that taketh a city.* While on the opposite side, *He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls;* which by all who know its state is disregarded and despised. *Keep therefore your heart with all diligence, knowing that from thence are the issues of life.*

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For into a malicious soul wisdom shall not enter, nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin.

Be it then our daily study and strenuous endeavour, to discipline our minds according to the rules of sacred wisdom. Let us be solicitous to have them freed from the influence of exorbitant passions, and ornamented with the prime virtues of the christian character. Let us look well into ourselves, and endeavour to preserve good order there, for the honour of religion, and for our own comfort and satisfaction. In regard to regulation and ornament, let us ever remember, the greatest pains should be taken with our own tempers, with our dispositions and passions; for it will reflect the highest honour upon

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our characters to have it said that *Our principal adorning* is not that which is outward, mutable and perishing, but *the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, and which in the sight of God is of great price.*

Let me now direct your attention to the consideration of this point, which is the argument employed by the apostle to recommend and enforce the advice given in the text. Your souls are immortal, and so are those graces and virtues which belong to them; and consequently they are more deserving of culture and ornament than any thing beside which you are concerned with. What St. Peter would have a principal regard to, is characterised as that which is *not corruptible.*

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ruptible. Now this is what cannot be said of the body, or of any thing which belongs to it. The soul is the only part of our frame to which this character belongs, and the graces and virtues with which it is adorned. An essential part of religion consists in the government of the passions, and in regulating the temper of the mind. And such a dress of the inward man is *incorruptible*, not subject to change or decay, as the fashions of this world which soon pass away. It will live with us while we continue in this world, will appear the more shining and glorious the longer it is worn, it will not forsake us in the world to come, but there be *our joy, our glory, and our crown of rejoicing.* But the richest ornaments of the body will, like the body itself,

in a short time wear out, corrupt and perish, or by the mutations of time lose their gratefulness and value.

Satisfied we must therefore be that about forming our minds into amiable dispositions, we cannot be too solicitous; nor should we think much of our labour, though it was required to be much greater than really it need to be. For honour or shame, happiness or misery, must attend us through this world, and the degree or measure of each will greatly depend upon the right government of our inclinations and dispositions. The longer our minds are neglected, the more unhappy our condition, and the more difficult will it be to bring about any alteration for the better. Every thing that was de-
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signed by God to be cultivated and improved, soon shews itself to be neglected by that which it produces. Thus it is with regard to the earth: if neglected, it is over-run with weeds, thorns and briars; but the industrious labourer it rewards with fruits of various kinds. It repays his diligence, and presents to his view the fairest prospect of plenty. And is it not thus with the human mind? are not innumerable vices the consequence of its being neglected? Whereas on the contrary, do not the most amiable virtues spring up in consequence of religious and virtuous discipline? such as administer an ever-verdant shade, under the branches of which peace of conscience may continually reside without disturbance.

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As our souls are immortal, so are those graces and virtues, which religion directs us habitually to cultivate. They are not like the fruits of the earth, or material ornaments, which slide insensibly into decay. They are suited to the immortal soil in which they are intended to grow for ever. If care is taken to preserve them from the infection of impiety and vice, they will never wither. Under religious cultivation, they will continue to improve, both in their amiableness and strength. In their own nature there is no principle of decay, but they are as the text expresses it, *incorruptible*. While the soul lives, they will live with it, and in a future world cause it to appear most lovely and divine. But with respect to the body, as *we brought*
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nothing with us into this world, so it is certain we can take nothing out.

The hand of death will strip us of all these, and turn us naked into the grave.

But over the soul and its virtuous qualities, death hath no power. Having in this life put on *the robe of righteousness*, and being *cloathed with the garments of salvation*, these will be our attire when introduced into the assembly of *the spirits of just men made perfect*.

Therefore covet earnestly these best gifts, the incorruptible ornaments of the mind, especially a meek, peaceable, courteous and obliging temper, which is *in the sight of God of great price*.

Now what stronger allurements to the practice of any virtue can we desire, than to know that it stands high in

the divine estimation, will secure his favour, and be followed by a recompence of reward from him? What can the most ambitious and covetous wish for more, than to possess those qualities which the *King of kings*, whose is the world and the fulness thereof, delights to honour and reward? To know the regard which God pays to this amiable accomplishment in his creatures, shall I refer you to the consideration of the divine nature and perfections, and ask whether he must not be pleased, with what bears a resemblance to his own excellencies, and delight in those who are imitators of him? *The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy and truth.* But instead of dwelling upon this argument, I shall

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refer you to the declarations of holy writ, the more sure word of God's promise. To encourage the cultivation of this grace it is said, *The meek shall eat and be satisfied. The meek will be guide in judgment, the meek will be teach his way.* Words which strongly express God's particular delight and pleasure in those, who are adorned with meekness of spirit. Of such it is also said, *They shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace.* These words in Psalm cxliv, are too remarkable to be here omitted: *The Lord will beautify the meek with salvation.* To conclude these promises, let me add that our blessed Lord has included this character in the number of those whom he hath pronounced blessed. *Blessed are the meek, for they*

shall inherit the earth, shall have the most pleasing and comfortable enjoyment of life, and the various bounties of Providence. That the exercise of a meek and quiet spirit contributes greatly to our own peace and satisfaction, and that it will assuredly procure us the esteem and love of our friends and acquaintance, are no small recommendations of it: but these dwindle into nothing when it is considered that it is *in the sight of God of great price.* When this is proved, all other arguments in its behalf are tiresome and vain. *For in his favour is life, and his loving kindness is better than life.* They who will not be persuaded by this consideration, it is to be feared, *neither will they be persuaded though one should rise from the dead.* I beseech you therefore as those who

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who are now the *elect of God*, and who hereafter hope to be *holy and beloved of him*, that ye put on *bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another in love*, and endeavouring to keep the *unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*. Better is it to dwell in the most retired and incommodious part of a house, *in a corner of the house top*, in the enjoyment of peace and amity, than in the most wide and sumptuous palace, with those who are of a peevish and boisterous spirit. *Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.* The justice of these observations we cannot all but acknowledge and approve. Happy would it

be for us, were they sunk down into our hearts, and every one lived as under their influence. Then would the busy haunts of men be filled with the sweet intercourses of mildness and love. Then would the distracting spirit of fretfulness and anger be no more heard or felt, each irascible vexatious passion would be charmed into silence, and the bosoms of men become the habitations of every thing engaging, amiable and excellent. Lovely in ourselves, we should then be beloved of all. The same *mind would be in us which was also in Christ Jesus, who was meek and lowly in heart; and who has recommended us herein to learn of him, that we may find rest unto our souls.* And when we shall be removed from this world, where it is impossible but *offences will come,* we shall

shall be introduced into those mansions of everlasting repose and quietness, where charity reigns in every heart, sincerity smiles on every countenance, and all our work will be acts of mutual complacency and love.

Thus by every motive which can engage and allure the human heart we are called upon, to *adorn ourselves with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.*

PRAYER.

P R A Y E R.

O God, who art love and who dwellest in love, may we earnestly endeavour to imitate thy constant and universal goodness. As the disciples of Jesus may we put on bowels of mercy, kindness, compassion, humbleness of mind, long-suffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another. May we be adorned with the ornament of a meek, compassionate and forgiving spirit. May every good and generous disposition be daily improving in our breasts, until we become fit for that happy kingdom, where love, peace and joy reign for evermore.

Our Father, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N VII.

ON GLORIFYING GOD IN ALL OUR
ACTIONS.

I COR. x. 31.

*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or
whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory
of God.*

THIS passage has been usually
considered by all writers in one
view, as very expressive of a religious
temper. They refer not only to the
great and important actions of life,
which ought always and directly to aim
at the glory of God; but also to our
smaller

smaller and indifferent actions, which ought by a general and habitual intention to have the same tendency. But perhaps comparatively few have examined into the reasonableness of what is here commanded, and the real foundation there is in truth to support it. I am very far from looking upon the words in the text, as such an overflow of a good heart, as will not bear strict scrutiny; but must be taken with some moderating limitations.—I am of opinion there are few, if any, sententious sayings which exceed this, in the fullness of its sense; or which better deserve to be amply illustrated. Let us therefore, as here directed, resolve in all the common actions of life, which are attended with a constant share in its common engagements, to glorify God
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ourselves, and exert our strongest endeavours to promote a regard to his glory in the world.

Give me leave to enumerate some of those actions which most frequently and statedly occur, and to point out the religious dispositions honourable to God, which should accompany them; by a regard to which it will appear, that *whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we are solicitous to do all to the glory of God.*

I shall begin with those the Apostle mentions, eating, and drinking; in which offices the imperfection of our nature requires us, at certain seasons, to be employed. Though these are sensual acts, and of course much inferior

ferior in their nature, and in their pleasures, to those which respect our nobler and better part; yet they should stately remind us of Him, who has provided for us variety of food, who liberally supplies our returning wants with his bounties, who hath annexed to our constitution a power of receiving his gifts with pleasure, and who blesteth our daily bread, so that we are refreshed and nourished by it. In receiving the means of subsistence, we are only doing that, which all living creatures, down to the worm under our feet, do as well as we; but should not we do more? Should not we discern and praise the hand that gives? Is it not highly necessary and proper, that such acts performed by the rational creatures of God, should not be brutishly performed,

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formed, but distinguished by some circumstances honourable to the Deity, and becoming of our dutiful acknowledgment of him? Should we think great injustice was done us, if *we* were put upon a level with the beasts of the field. Yet if we receive our food, without offering up a dutiful tribute of acknowledgment to God for his mercies; or if we abuse them by intemperance and rioting, hereby we sink ourselves down below the level of human nature, and give room for that to be said of us, which cannot be said of the inferior animals; that we partake of the bounties of Providence with irreverence, and ingratitude, and are guilty of shameful excesses. They are clear of these charges, because they cannot attain to the knowledge of God, and take only what nature

ture demands for its comfortable support. Let us maintain therefore a thankful remembrance of Him who spreads our table, and *satisfieth our mouth with good things ; and take heed to ourselves least at any time our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.*

They cannot be supposed to have any regard to the glory of God, who habitually transgress the laws of moderation and sobriety, and become addicted to the excesses of gluttony, intoxication, and revelling. In all things *let us be sober and temperate*, knowing that every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving. Let the divine liberalities be improved, by grateful reflections upon the generous
bounty

bounty of him who bestows them, and by kind thoughts towards those who partake with us, connected with a merciful remembrance of those who are in want. Whosoever thus receives, and thus improves the bounties of providence, glorifieth God.

When engaged in work, and following our several employments, rural or domestic, we ought in these to glorify God, who thus preserveth us from the miseries of idleness and poverty, and puts it into our power to provide for ourselves, and families.

The fruits of the earth are not more properly the gifts of God to men, than all the advantages that arise from trade and commerce. He formed man with
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powers, dispositions, and inclinations for society, and for the pursuit of various schemes and labours. The materials for human workmanship he has provided, and to man he hath given strength and skill to work them up for various uses; some of necessity, and others for convenience and ornament.—Wood and iron, lead and copper, flax and wool, are the principal materials, with which we are furnished, and by a proper application of them, we are provided with houses to dwell in, clothes to cover us, and a variety of utensils and other things, greatly advantageous to the comfort of life. These things should lead us to a thankful admiration of the wisdom and goodness of God. Praise is ever due to him, who has furnished mankind with such plenty of materials
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for their accommodation and employment, and who has given them a capacity to make their labours upon these the constant sources of manifold comforts.

The divine goodness is as conspicuous in these things, as in the light of the sun, the falling showers, and those productions of the earth which annually clothe it. In all things let us religiously look up to God, and adore the wonderfully gracious ways of his providence to man. As it is he who blesteth the plow, and repays the sower's diligence with a well ripened harvest in due time; so it is he who prospereth man in all his labours, and who profitably rewards his various toils. Every good christian, who makes such thoughts as these

familiar to him, will find by experience the spirit of true piety to be much promoted. Such thoughts will assist him in obtaining, what is singularly desirable, I mean that even, cheerful contentment of mind, which sweetens to him the duties of his own station, and prevents him from envying the more easy and opulent station of others. By labour and industry, by ingenuity and care, by honesty and fidelity, by conscientiously fulfilling the duties of his station, he endeavours to glorify *the God whose he is, and whose are all his ways.*

We should bear testimony to the divine goodness, in partaking of the blessings of rest and sleep.

It becomes the inhabitants of this world, who are much benefited by it, religiously

religiously to reflect upon the sweet vicissitude of day and night, which regularly revolve in the course of providence. This change is in general for the advantage of all the creatures which dwell upon the face of the earth, but most remarkably for the benefit of mankind, and those animals which in assisting their labours are the most serviceable. Rest is as natural, and as necessary to the human constitution, as action. After being employed a certain time, the powers of nature begin to flag; and being exerted beyond their strength, become injured. Weariness brought on by the business of the day, is therefore followed by the shades of the evening, which call the labourer from his toil. The hand of that Providence, which is ever mindful of our frailties and in-

firmities, with the indulgent care of a parent, draws the sable curtains of night around a wearied and drowsy world, and sends in mercy the blessings of sleep, to refresh tired bodies, and fatigued minds. Though darkness and silence are the wonted messengers that bring these blessings, yet in this the goodness of God speaks aloud, and is clearly visible; and we have equal reason to praise their gracious Author as they approach with the evening, as when at the return of morning light they retire.

In these vicissitudes, most friendly to the present state and condition of our being, it is undoubtedly our duty to meditate upon the kindness of the Almighty. Nor should we ever lie
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down upon our beds brutishly thoughtless of him, whose providence is sufficient by the constant return of day and night to convince us, that he constantly remembers how frail we are.

Thus careful is he to provide for our support, and for our refreshment, and to enable us to prosecute the business of the day. There is no night in heaven, because the inhabitants of that more perfect state are released from the sluggish burdens of mortality, and are capable of being ever active and watchful, without their powers becoming enfeebled, or suffering any diminution in their pleasures. But as it is otherwise with the frail inhabitants of this world, God hath made a merciful provision for their infirmity. In

the belief of this, let us be ready to acknowledge that *it is a good thing to shew forth God's loving kindness in the morning, and to record his faithfulness every night.*

In walking forth amidst the works of creation, and travelling from place to place, the varied prospects of a wise and indulgent Providence which present themselves, should be practically improved, and awaken our hearts to an affectionate celebration of his glory, who appointed all these things.

How great is the pleasure which we are capable of receiving, and which we actually do receive, by beholding through the organs of vision the different beautiful appearances of the creation!

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creation ! When thus our eyes are pleasingly employed, our hearts should rejoice in Him, who by these curious entrances, irradiates the soul with external light, and empowers it daily to converse with the wonderful works of God. This sort of converse, to every wise and good man, will be instructively agreeable ; and will promote that true piety, which gratitude and love inspire. Our meditation on the most common scenes of nature will be full of the Deity, and always grateful to ourselves, because always accompanied with admiration of him and love to him. The improvements to be acquired this way, will reflect honour upon our characters ; and be to us, both when alone and in company, an inexhaustible fund of entertainment. While surrounded with
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the evidence of God's power, wisdom, and goodness, we shall not *live as without God in the world*, but discern his glory, and magnify his holy name.

When walking through some well-plann'd garden, where order and variety are combined, and varied prospects arise to delight and charm us, do we admire and praise the man, whose ingenuity and taste formed these beauties? And shall we not observe, or be silent when we observe, the matchless beauties of creation, the wonderful work of Him whose *knowledge is perfect*?

For the blessings of conversation and friendship we should praise God, and glorify him in the use of them.

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Though the sun in the firmament was to continue to shine upon us with its kindest beams, though the former and the latter rain were to descend in the season, and the increase of the year failed not; though days and nights alternately revolved, and it were given us to rest safely in the hours appointed for rest, and to enjoy those allotted to action: yet deprived of converse with our fellow-creatures, how burdensome would life become, and how solitary its days!

God hath appointed no worldly blessing to contribute more to the cheerfulness of the human heart, to the lessening its troubles and sorrows, and to the increase of its enjoyments, than conversation; especially the kind converse

verse of relatives and friends. This beguiles the labours of the day, by pleasingly intermixing with them; and when wearied with toil, renders the evening grateful and refreshing. This often innocently relieves the pensive and too thoughtful mind, and every day does the soul good like a medicine. How much is it to be lamented that the organs of speech, which the Psalmist calls *our glory*, should be so frequently perverted into the instruments of impiety, profaneness, and vice! Let us ever be careful that we do not thus prostitute, and shamefully abuse, those powers which ought to be habitually employed in celebrating the praises of the Almighty, and in the peaceful enjoyment of our family and friends. With the voice of joy in our habitations,

tions, let us daily cultivate thanksgiving to God in our hearts, declare the glory due unto his name, and instruct those who are under our care constantly to return their dutiful acknowledgments to him.

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to God for his mercies, and the
blessings of his love, and in return
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return him our love and gratitude
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S E R M O N VIII.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE HISTORY OF THE BLIND MAN
THAT WAS RESTORED TO SIGHT BY JESUS.

JOHN ix. 34.

*They answered and said unto him, Thou
wast altogether born in sins, and dost
thou teach us? And they cast him out.*

NOTHING has a more manifest
tendency to injure the happiness
of mankind, than the sad effects of
prejudices and inveterate prepossessions.
When under their influence, there is
nothing so unreasonable and absurd that
men will not say; nothing so monstrous
and

and wicked that they will not do. These will make them shut their eyes against the clearest light of truth, harden their hearts against the strongest efforts of persuasion, and hurry them on to the greatest irregularities and violences of conduct.

When persons are prejudiced against a man, or a particular doctrine, they are determined beforehand to disregard and reject the one, and to oppose and ill treat the other. It is of little importance what plainness and excellency of argument is offered them, or even what offices of kindness and love are done to them. They will resist and pervert the former, and put an ill-natured and malicious construction upon the latter. The demonstration of the spirit

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spirit and of power shall be borne down by them; and be it at the peril of their comfort and their lives, that any one offers to undeceive them.

Of this we have several instances in the gospels, with respect to the Scribes and Pharisees, and rulers among the Jews. None could be more strongly, and yet more unjustly and unreasonably prejudiced against any one, than they were against Jesus and his doctrine. Most truly did he say of them, *This people have shut their eyes, that they might not see, closed their ears, that they might not hear, hardened their hearts, that they might not understand: lest they should be converted, and I should heal them.*

We have not a more glaring instance of their perverseness and wilful contra-

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diction and obstinacy, than we read of
 in this chapter. Here, as in a glass,
 we may behold its woful effects upon
 the human mind; how it distorts the
 understanding, corrupts the judgment,
 and lays waste every thing amiable and
 praise-worthy in the soul. Not content
 with abusing and vilifying Jesus, the
 particular object of their dislike and
 inveteracy, they treat all those with
 virulence and injustice, who think or
 speak favourably of him. What could
 more powerfully excite a man's grati-
 tude, or engage him to think well of
 a person, than the kindness which Jesus
 did the man spoken of in this chapter?
 And how hard and unjust must it have
 been for him, on this account to be
 treated with so much contempt and
 rudeness by the Pharisees, ordered to
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be excommunicated, and declared an apostate from the religion of his country! But this was actually the case with the poor man, to whom they said, Thou art a bold and impertinent fellow, brought up all thy life-time in ignorance and wickedness, with an understanding as dark and blind as thy body; and dost thou pretend to instruct us, who are the teachers and guides of the people, men eminent for learning and skill in religion, and for extraordinary holiness and strictness of life? *And they cast him out*; that is, ordered him to be put out of the synagogue, declared an excommunicated person, and deprived of the privileges and advantages of the public worship of God.

I shall not more fully particularize this transaction. The story is so striking

and instructive, I cannot suppose any one unacquainted with it. My business shall be to draw from it, and particularly from this latter part, some general observations, that may be of practical use and advantage to ourselves.

The first thing that claims our attention is, the unreasonable length to which the displeasure and fury of the Jewish rulers proceeded against Jesus and his followers. They appear to have been incensed to the last degree against the man born blind, and to whom Jesus had given sight, because in gratitude he thought favourably of him, esteemed him to be a prophet, or one sent into the world with an extraordinary commission from God. For maintaining this truth, that miracles performed in
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the name of God, were evident tokens of an extraordinary mission, they abused and condemned this poor man. And yet this was no other than what they themselves embraced and recommended as a most sacred truth, when applied to Moses. But such is the infatuation of prejudice, they rejected it as highly impious, when applied to Christ, though he wrought his miracles at that very time, and even in their city, and there so circumstanced, that they could not invent any means of disproving them. But consistency of conduct was what they little regarded. They had an interest to serve by opposing Christ. They must therefore at all adventures discourage him and all his adherents. They had before agreed, that if any man confessed that Jesus was the Christ,

he should be put out of the synagogue; now they carry this determination into execution: *and they cast him out.*

This is the first person we read of, who suffered on account of his attachment to Jesus, and for espousing his cause in opposition to the determination and authority of the ruling persons in his country. But how many since have suffered the like reproach for the same cause? Desirous to preserve their integrity and their fidelity to God, they would not yield up their understandings to be dictated to in matters of religion by the men in power. In all ages and in all countries this hath been esteemed a grievous offence, and many have suffered the most cruel treatment for being so presumptuous as to judge for themselves.

Let

Let us, in the next place, consider what was consequent upon this excommunication or casting out. Such violent and unjust methods generally are, and in this case were, unsuccessful. They are rarely able to suppress the truth, and support the cause of ignorance and irreligion. They could not in this instance check the spread of the christian doctrine, or deter this man from professing his regard for Jesus. They may powerfully influence weak and timorous spirits, and thus give rise to much hypocrisy. But as every man's judgment naturally is, and cannot but be, free in its opinions, and as opposition and ill usage many times render it more stiff and unyielding; so unless it is strongly prejudiced in early life, it will have a mean opinion of those who

endeavour to act in an arbitrary and tyrannical manner over the consciences of others. Whenever such have a man of resolution, integrity and good sense to deal with, by having recourse to measures oppressive and overbearing, they are almost sure to expose themselves.

Uninfluenced by any thing the Pharisees could say or do to him, the man believed in Jesus as the Christ; and no doubt, continued a steadfast and worthy disciple through the remainder of his life. He had abilities and dispositions, by which he was every way well qualified to become a propagator of the christian faith. He could reason in a close and convincing manner, from the first principles of religion and righteousness.

righteousness. He was a man of much integrity and simplicity of spirit, and of an upright and unblameable conversation. He had fortitude and undaunted resolution of mind, to profess and maintain the truth, even though he suffered for it.

We may again observe, that no severe forms of excommunication, especially for matters of religious opinion, can be justified by reason. No man, or body of men, can have any just authority to treat their fellow-creatures in such a manner, for differing from them in judgment. Such a claim is arrogant and impious, and subversive of all virtue and real religion. It is an iniquitous engine, by which men in power have kept all others in a slavish submission
and

and dependance upon them. It is the great support of priestly domination and spiritual tyranny, which of all tyrannies is the worst.

If any thing in nature should be free, the understanding and judgment must be left so. Men must have liberty to think and determine for themselves, or else in reality they have no religion at all. To be obliged implicitly, for fear of severe penalties, to follow the public leading, when reason and conscience remonstrate against it, is the most wretched state of slavery, into which a man of reflection, honesty, enlarged views, and generous principles, can be thrown.

We may challenge all the world to shew any advantages that can arise from these

these excommunications, either to the persons thus harshly treated, or to the interest of religion and the community in general. On the other hand, many arguments may be brought to shew, that their consequences are exceedingly pernicious. They discourage all enquiries and improvements in religious knowledge, and are the fast holds by which superstition keeps its ground. They make men hypocrites and dissemblers, in an affair wherein truth and conscience should speak most freely. They may indeed sometimes restrain the turbulent, and put the vicious to shame; but it is also to be remembered, that the honest and upright will be liable in bad times, to suffer the greatest insult and injury.

If

If we look into the world, and examine the records of history, we shall find that excommunications have generally been made use of for bad purposes; and that it is not the worst, but the best of men that have smarted by them. Such proceedings make religion itself to be evil spoken of, and create a disgust against it. When popery was at its height, and the bishops of Rome rioted in the insolence of an usurped power; how terrible were the effects of an excommunication to the greatest lords, princes, and kingdoms in the christian world! With what a severe and iron rod did they then rule! In what abject servitude was the civil power then kept by the hand of ecclesiastic tyranny! Even in this kingdom at present, the effects of such a sentence are grievous, and

and the power by which it is upheld to be detested. All men of sense complain of it, as an insult upon our boasted liberty, an outrage upon our civil rights, a scandalous spiritual juggle and holy traffic, an audacious mockery of religion, and a foul disgrace upon the established church. Thus the most dangerous instrument is put into the hands of men, whereby they are tempted for mercenary views, to defame the characters of the good, and harrafs the consciences of the honest; to prevent the right course of christian tenderness and moderation, and through ill usage to make many enemies to religion.

As no severe forms of excommunication can be justified by reason, neither can they be warranted by any Gospel precept or example.

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The general and particular precepts of the Gospel, when explained in a consistent manner, will be found universally to proceed from that good spirit of love and tenderness, which is in direct opposition to all curses and excommunicating denunciations. They are all calculated to promote the peace and happiness of men's lives, and to advance the true honour of religion. They give no man an authority over the faith and consciences of others; nor support any claims that are detrimental to society. When it is thought necessary for the welfare and good order of the community, that evil doers should be punished, the rules of the Gospel direct that these punishments should be tempered with moderation and equity, and have a salutary tendency. But excommunications

cations proceed from a quite different spirit, and are justly to be detested on account of the rigour and severity they carry in them.

As no men living possess the apostolic gifts and power, so nothing can be argued as a precedent to others, from some parts of their conduct, which were acts of an extraordinary nature. For wise reasons, they were authorized by God, to give a reverence and sanction to the christian religion, then in its infancy. Where circumstances so widely differ, as the present state of christianity, from what it was in the days of the Apostles, their example cannot be pleaded in support of ecclesiastic censures. Whatever acts at the first establishment of christianity, were of
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an extraordinary and miraculous nature, now stand only as testimonies of its divine original, and the power by which it was upheld. They are entirely distinct from such Gospel rules and precepts, as relate to private christians, or to the government of families and societies in future ages.

As to the rigorous forms of excommunication used in some christian churches, any impartial man of ordinary capacity and acquaintance with history, knows they are not derived from the Gospel, but from the decrees of popes and councils, and what is called the canon law. And what is still more, it is easy to perceive what gives life and force to them, even a love of domination over the under-standings

standings and consciences of men; a desire to lord it over their faith, and not to be helpers of their joy; an attempt to turn religion into an engine by which they may gratify their worldly ambition, and make merchandize of the faith and practice of others.

From this passage we may observe, that plain truth, when closely adhered to, will at any time be able to overcome error, though enthroned in power; and that a man of honest dispositions is in a fairer way to understand the truth, than a whole council of learned doctors, who are under the power of prejudice.

Here is an instance of a person who was born blind, and in the lowest state

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of

of poverty; and who must consequently have been deprived of all the advantages of a liberal education, maintaining the truth against a great body of learned men, with such strength of reasoning, that they had not a word to reply. This poor blind beggar, by keeping to the plain truth, and following the natural dictates of an uncorrupted heart, baffled, confounded, and silenced the Pharisees, with all their learning and all their power.

If persons have but resolution to stand by it, the cause of truth and righteousness will bear up against, and even prevail over, the arts of error and wickedness: while the latter cannot stand and bear examination, but fly for support to delusion and violence; the former,

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former, the more it is searched into, will appear brighter and stronger. It demands nothing but a fair and impartial hearing. However his passions and interests may lead him astray, and induce him to support a wrong and weak cause, the law written upon every man's heart, will make him inwardly approve what is right and true. Sinful inclinations and desires may attempt to smother divine truth, but they can never totally extinguish it. They may discountenance and punish its advocates, but can never convince and silence them. In spite of all these methods to confound good and evil, the light by which they are distinguished will shine upon their minds.

Another observation deducible from what hath been said is this, human

censures and forms of condemnation, cannot exclude any good and virtuous man from the love of God, and the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As to the blessings and privileges of society; as to the advantages and pleasures of the public services of religion; and even as to the peace and comfort of, their own habitations, it is in the power of their fellow-creatures to deprive the best and most excellent ones of the earth. And thus many have been treated, of whom the world was not worthy. Names of ignominy and reproach have been cast upon them, and they have been shunned and hated by their neighbours and acquaintance. They have been banished from their families

families and friends, obliged to wander about in deserts and mountains, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. They have had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover, of bonds and imprisonments, of tortures and death. But none of these things were able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Human malice and vengeance is impotent, and can reach no farther than the grave. It can make no alteration in your esteem and acceptance with God. It cannot you banish from his favour, or deprive any virtuous man of the mercy of Almighty God. These ungodly sentences shall meet with no ratification from him. Because, by the wickedness of men in high places, a

man is excluded from the congregation of the faithful in this world, this is no reason for him to fear, that a righteous and merciful God will exclude him from the assembly of just men made perfect in heaven.

But if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye, for the spirit of God and of glory resteth upon you. This blind man was one of the first in the christian world, who experienced the happiness resulting from this promise. He was rejected by the Pharisees; but for the steadiness and sincerity of his conduct, he was amply recompensed. Without delay he was honourably admitted into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. When cast out of the Jewish church, he was received into
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the christian, which is established upon better and more excellent promises. Thus was his gain unspeakably greater than his loss. None can shut the gates of heaven against their fellow-creatures.

From what hath been said, let us learn not to be concerned at any dishonour which may be cast upon us by wicked and unreasonable men, for our attachment to the principles of religion, and the testimony of a good conscience; but let us be seriously concerned not to do any thing, by which we shall cast ourselves out of the divine favour.

Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.

Secure of his approbation we may say with the apostle, *With me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of*

you, or of man's judgment; but he that judgeth me, and to whose judgment I am solicitous to approve myself, is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart. It is not he that commendeth himself, or is commended by others, that is approved; but whom the Lord commendeth. Take heed therefore that you do not that, by resting in a vain security, which all mankind, if they were your enemies, could not do; that is, exclude yourselves from entering, after death, into the divine presence, in the realms of light, and happiness above. Live so, that an entrance may be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of your Lord.

We

We are all now in God's kingdom of grace, and partakers of the mercies and blessings of the Gospel. We all now belong to the house and family of God, and are treated by him as children. No one knoweth the love or hatred of the Supreme Being, by the dispensations of his providence to them in this life. But hereafter there will be a discrimination made, according to men's use and improvement of the advantages received in this life. There will be a dreadful casting out at the end of time, of which we are by the Gospel solemnly admonished. A casting out, not according to the arbitrary and unreasonable proceedings of excommunication amongst men, but according to perfect righteousness and goodness, upon an impartial examination of our conduct in this world.

Behold

Behold the day cometh, of which we are now forewarned, when the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. Let us also remember these words, which may as well be applied to Christians as to Jews; Verily I say unto you, that many shall come from the east, and west, and shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darknesses.

To conclude; May that God, who hath blessed us with external sight to behold his works, and who hath given us understanding and affections to praise
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the constant operations of his wife and mercifully regulated power, preserve us from all the paths of error and wickedness ! May his truth ever enlighten the road in which we go, and the transforming influences of religion enable us to persevere in our fidelity to the Gospel, unto the end ! If we should suffer censures and reproaches, excommunications and imprisonments, for our religious faith and profession, let none of these things move us ; neither let us think any thing too dear to part with, so that we may finish our course with joy. Let us be animated by the behaviour of this man, whose eyes Christ opened, and bear up manfully in the profession of what is right, though frowned upon by men of wealth and power.

While

While we continue steadfast in our obedience to him, let these words of our Saviour encourage and comfort us.

All that the Father giveth to me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will by no means cast out. Let us remember these words in the book of Job, the truth of which is firmer than the mountains, and more durable than the earth. *Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help evil doers:* but he will guide the upright by his counsels, uphold him by his power, and afterwards receive him into glory.

F O R M S

O F

P R A Y E R.

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER.

MOST great and glorious Lord
God ! We adore and worship
thee as the only living and true God :
Thou art God in heaven above and earth
beneath, and throughout all worlds ;
there is none besides thee. The hea-
vens are thy throne, and the earth is
thy foot-stool ; and thou doest what-
soever thou pleasest in the armies of the
celestial

222 FORMS OF PRAYER.

celestial world, and amongst the inhabitants of this earth. Thou, O God, art exalted in majesty and power far above our highest conceptions; yet, so great is thy goodness and condescension, that we are encouraged to hope thou wilt graciously regard, and accept, the homage of thy imperfect creatures, who worship thee in spirit and in truth. Encouraged, O most merciful Father, by the goodness of thy nature, and the promises of the Gospel of Jesus, we would now worship, and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our maker and preserver. May we do it with reverence and godly fear. May all the powers of our souls be now seriously engaged. May every part of our public devotion at this time be performed with that sincere piety, and true humility,

lity, which will render it acceptable to thee the Searcher of hearts, and truly beneficial to our own souls.

May we hearken to thy word as to the voice of God : may we sing thy praises with understanding and devotion : may we hearken to the instructions that shall be delivered, with attention, impartiality, and a sincere desire to be instructed in our duty. By attending the public ordinances of religion, may such good dispositions be excited, and such pious resolutions formed, as will have an effectual tendency to improve our dispositions, and reform our lives. And by these public acts of worship here below, may we be prepared for celebrating thy praises in a more exalted manner, in a future state,

state, in concert with angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; with whom we would now join, saying, Blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

P R A Y E R

BEFORE SERMON.

O Almighty and most merciful God! The heavens declare thy glory, and the firmament sheweth forth thy handy work. All nature loudly proclaims thy existence, and clearly demonstrates thy perfections. There is no speech, nor language, where this
voice

voice is not heard. With reverence and humility, with joy and confidence, we thy rational offspring now bow down ourselves before thee; to offer up that tribute of religious homage and praise, which thy perfections, the relation we stand in to thee, and the innumerable mercies we have received from thy bountiful hand, so strongly demand. We are sensible our goodness cannot extend unto God, neither can man be profitable to his Maker. It is impossible thou shouldest receive the least addition to thy perfection or happiness, by the best services of any of thy creatures; thou art also possessor of infinite knowledge, and art acquainted with all our wants; of unerring wisdom, and knowest much better what is good for us than we do ourselves;

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and

and the goodness of thy nature at all times disposes thee to deal with thy creatures in such a manner, as will most effectually tend to promote their truest felicity. We would not therefore vainly imagine that we can by our addresses to thee, increase thy perfection or happiness, we would not pretend to inform thy infinite knowledge, direct thy unerring wisdom, or move thy compassion. But it becomes us to celebrate and adore the perfections of thy nature, in order to impress a deeper sense of them upon our own minds ; we would offer up our petitions to thee, to fix in our own breasts a stronger sense of our constant and necessary dependance upon thee ; and we would offer up our intercessions for all mankind to improve and strengthen every friendly
and

and benevolent affection. With these views and intentions would we now come before thee our heavenly Father, adoring thee as the great Creator, the gracious Preserver, and the almighty Governor of the world. By thy power were the heavens, and all the hosts of them, made. Thou formedst this earth, and gave existence to all its various inhabitants; and all things are preserved in their original order and beauty, by the constant care of thy all ruling providence.

Thou, the Lord, reignest supreme over all; and it is matter of our greatest joy and rejoicing. We rejoice in that happiness we see diffused throughout the creation in general; and we would call upon our souls, and all that is within us,

to bless and praise thy holy name, for all the instances of thy mercy, and loving kindness, to us the sons of men. We thank thee that thou hast brought into existence; that thou has advanced us so high in the creation, and made us capable of tasting the pure and substantial pleasures of virtue and goodness. We bless thy name for the continual preservation of our lives; that thou art constantly supplying our returning wants; giving us food to eat, raiment to put on, and habitations to dwell in; and granting us such a measure of health and strength, to enjoy the bounties of thy kind providence.

But above all we bless thee, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ;
for

for the means of grace and the hopes of glory.

We cannot reflect on these instances of thy benignity and goodness, without sentiments of unfeigned gratitude towards thee, the giver of all good. Nor can we at the same time help acknowledging, the unsuitable returns we have made for so many unmerited favours. We have been too unmindful of thy goodness, and ungrateful to thee our continual benefactor. We have erred and strayed from the ways of thy commandments. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and have

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exposed

exposed ourselves to thy righteous displeasure. We bow ourselves before the throne of thy grace, imploring thy pardon. O God have mercy upon the work of thy hands, spare thou them who confess their faults; forgive and accept us, according to thy promises by Christ Jesus our Lord; and may we, for the time to come, more carefully discharge every branch of our duty, towards thee, our neighbour, and ourselves.

May we at all times retain a most devout sense, and holy admiration of thine excellent nature; reverence thy authority, and look up unto thee with satisfaction and joy, as the giver of all good; love thee with all our hearts; be thankful for thine innumerable and
undeserved

undeserved mercies ; confide in thine all gracious Providence ; and yield an unreserved and grateful obedience to all thy holy commandments.

May we discharge all those duties towards our fellow-creatures which are incumbent upon us, as we are members of the grand community of mankind ; and which those social affections thou hast implanted in our natures, so strongly direct us to perform. May we do to others, whatsoever we could reasonably desire them to do to us, were we in their circumstances and they in ours. May we not only do justice, but love mercy ; and have a compassionate regard for the welfare and happiness of all rational creatures ; endeavouring, as far as lies

Q. 4

within

within the reach of our abilities, to increase the happiness, and alleviate the distresses of all around us.

Enable us to maintain a constant government over our own appetites and passions, regulating them according to the dictates of reason and conscience: may we be sober, chaste, and temperate in all things; and not walk after the flesh, but after the spirit. By the constant practice of piety, righteousness, charity, and a regular self-government, may we fortify ourselves against all the evils of life, and arm ourselves against the fears of death. Under any temporal distresses that may befall us, may our integrity be our support; and when that awful period shall arrive, when all earthly things will fail of affording

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us any consolation, may we then have the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world. Thus may we finish our course with joy. And when we shall be called before thy righteous tribunal, to receive an equitable sentence according to the deeds done in the body, may we then appear with joy, be found upon the right hand of our judge, and hear that transporting sentence pronounced upon us; Well done ye good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.

We would not confine our petitions to ourselves alone, but in testimony of our good-will for all mankind, and in order to strengthen every good and benevolent

benevolent affection, we would offer up our petitions, for the welfare and happiness of all reasonable beings.

* O God the Creator of heaven and earth, the common Father of all mankind, we beseech thee to hear us not only in our prayers for ourselves, but in our intercessions for all our fellow-creatures. Make thy ways known upon the earth, and thy saving health unto all nations, that all mankind may be united in the pure and holy worship of thee, the true and living God, as the disciples of JESUS CHRIST, whom thou hast sent. May all those kingdoms which are already favoured with the light of the Gospel, profess it in

* This intercessory part, is by some ministers reserved for the prayer after sermon.

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the greatest purity ; may it be effectually reformed from all gross and debasing mixtures ; may it prevail in its original and genuine simplicity ; and may it have the happiest effect upon the lives and tempers of all its professors. Unite the minds of Christians in charity and godly love, may they all be led to the right understanding and practice of our holy religion, and may an entire end be put to all persecution, and usurpation, over the judgments and consciences of mankind.

Bless and preserve the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland ; defend us from the designs of our enemies, and from all great and wating calamities ; and confirm and continue to us, that wise and equal government, under which

which in thy great mercy thou hast placed us. Bless and preserve thy servant GEORGE our king, fill his heart with every royal virtue; succeed all his just undertakings; may he be the faithful guardian of our public liberties; and after a life of extensive usefulness in this world, advance him to thy heavenly and everlasting kingdom.

May it please thee to bless our gracious queen CHARLOTTE, his royal highness GEORGE PRINCE of Wales, and all the royal family.

O God of infinite wisdom, be graciously present in the great Council of the nation at this time in Parliament assembled: may they have wisdom to discern, and integrity to pursue the welfare

welfare of these kingdoms; and may all their debates be so over-ruled by thy providence, as finally to terminate in thy honour; the encouragement of virtue and true religion; and the establishment of our civil and religious liberties throughout all generations.

May the lords of the council, and all the nobility, be eminent for wisdom, piety, and virtue.

May the judges and all the magistrates of these lands impartially distribute justice, be a terror to all evil doers, and a praise and protection to all who do well. Illuminate all bishops, and pastors, with true knowledge and understanding of thy word; may they faithfully discharge the duties of their
respective

respective stations, and by the excellency of their doctrine, and the holiness of their lives, may they save themselves and all who hear them. Bless our universities, and all schools and seminaries of learning: may they promote the true principles of religion, virtue, and liberty; and may all useful knowledge more generally prevail.

Preserve all those who are travelling by land or by water; all women labouring with child; all sick persons and young children: support the aged; provide for the widows, and fatherless, and all who are desolate, oppressed, or afflicted in mind, body, or estate, and shew thy mercy to all prisoners and captives; especially to such as are suffering for righteousness sake. Bless

our

FORMS OF PRAYER. 239

our friends; reward our benefactors;
forgive our enemies, persecutors, and
flanderers, and turn their hearts.

* Almighty and most merciful God,
who has permitted us at this time,
with one accord to make our common
supplications unto thee; fulfil the de-
sires and petitions of thy servants, as
may be most expedient for them; grant-
ing us in this world knowledge of thy
truth, and in the world to come life
everlasting.

OUR Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom
come. Thy will be done on earth, as
it is in heaven. Give us this day our
daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against

us.

us. And lead us not into temptation ;
but deliver us from evil : for thine is
the kingdom, and the power, and the
glory, for ever. Amen.

F O R M

O F

ADMINISTERING THE ORDINANCE

O F

BAPTISM TO INFANTS.

IT was our Saviour's command to his apostles to *go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.*

In obedience to this precept of the great Author of our religion, it has

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been

been the custom of all christians to be baptized, from the early ages of christianity even to this day. It has been matter of much dispute, whether this ordinance was ever to be administered to infants, or solely confined to adults; and whether it was to be performed by immersion, or sprinkling. This dispute is too copious for any thing more than the bare mention of it; nor can I think it a matter of great moment, as the directions of sacred truth do not positively determine it. We know that whole families were baptized, amongst whom it is probable there were some who had not arrived at years of maturity: at the same time we are assured that all who were arrived at mature age, were initiated into the Christian Church by baptism.

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The water we make use of, whether by immersion, or sprinkling, can be of no other use, than to point out to us that purity, which the religion of Jesus requires of all its professors.

When this ordinance was administered to persons who had arrived to the full use of their reasoning powers, it might doubtless have some moral effect upon them. They hereby gave their full assent to the truth of christianity, publicly professed themselves the disciples of Jesus, and bound themselves to obey the precepts of his religion. And in those early ages of christianity, when its professors were exposed to much obloquy, danger, persecution, and various distresses, they who openly professed themselves the disciples of

Jesus, shewed no small degree of heroic virtue; and we have all the reason in the world to believe, they were christians, not only in name, but in deed and reality; for hereby they forfeited much, and gained nothing.

But let us remember, we are now going to administer this ordinance to an infant, who is of no religion at all, and incapable of any immediate moral impressions. We do not therefore expect it to operate instantaneously and miraculously upon this child. The present subject of this service is entirely passive; it lays itself under no obligations, nor can possibly be either the better or the worse, more virtuous or otherwise, more or less a Christian, on account of any thing we can now say or do.

In

In order to perform this service rationally, we must therefore consider it entirely as an act of the parents; by which they in a solemn manner dedicate their child to God who gave it; express their resolution to instruct it in the principles and duties of the Christian Religion; acknowledge the divine goodness in the birth of a child; recognize the parental relation and duty; and implore the continuance of the divine favour and mercy to them, and to their offspring.

When this Sacrament is administered to children, there seems a peculiar propriety in performing it early; as we may suppose the parents' minds are then most open to religious and moral impressions, being affected with the newness of the relation, and a fresh

instance of the divine protection and mercy. Upon this account we are willing to take the first opportunity to assist them, in forming those sentiments, and encouraging those good dispositions and resolutions, which are becoming the importance of a religious and christian education.

It is customary amongst some christian churches to have sponsors, who answer questions proposed to the infant, and who, though often little connected with it, seem the chief persons concerned: to them every thing is addressed, and from them every thing is required.

To this another custom has been added of signing with the sign of the cross. But as the former appears to

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me unreasonable, and both unprecedented in the New Testament, I shall omit them. As this is a positive rite of our religion, it appears to me, at least a great impropriety, either to add to it, or diminish from it.

It has been a common custom, on these occasions to demand from the parents, a confession concerning difficult and disputed articles of faith: but I shall wave every thing of this sort, not wishing to lord it over your consciences, or establish you in any particular sect of Christians. In these respects, I shall leave you entirely to judge and determine for yourselves.

By your requesting the performance of this ceremony, it cannot be doubted,

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that

that you believe in the being, perfections, and providence of that God, to whom you are now going to dedicate this child, and that you acknowledge the divine authority of the Christian Religion : and what is of much more importance than any religious faith whatever, I hope you are now conscious of the best dispositions towards God and your fellow creatures, and that while you solemnly dedicate this child to your common Father in heaven, you resolve to devote yourselves to his faithful service, through the remainder of your lives.

NAME THIS CHILD.

This child, which is named N. I baptize in the name of the FATHER and

INFANT BAPTISM. 249

and of the son and of the HOLY
GHOST.

P R A Y E R.

ALMIGHTY GOD, and most merciful Father ! we adore thee as the great Creator, the gracious Preserver, and the Almighty Governor of the world ; as the former of our bodies, the father of our spirits, and the inexhaustible source of those numberless blessings we receive from thy daily providence. We thank thee that thou hast preserved us from our infancy to this day ; we bless thy name for all the advantages of education, and, above all, for the gospel of thy son. Enable us to understand it truly, to value it justly, and heartily to comply with all its excellent precepts and institutions. May it be further successful

cessful in enlightening our minds, correcting our errors, and forming in our minds all the amiable graces of the Christian life and temper. May its motives constrain, its examples engage, and its glorious promises animate us in a steady obedience to all thy commandments.

Almighty God, the father of mercies, and great preserver of life; we render thee our sincere thanks that thou hast supported and preserved thine handmaid in the pain and danger of travail, and hast made her the living mother of a living child. May she express her gratitude, by faithfully discharging her duty in every station of life. And do thou, O God of wisdom, so direct thy servants in the education of this child,
that

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that they may have the pleasure to see its infant mind gradually opening, growing, and improving in knowledge, virtue and happiness.

For this end we recommend this child to thy blessing, we submit it to the disposal of thy Providence, and devote it to thy service.

May the blessing of Almighty God be with this family, and all here present. May thy Providence, which hath hitherto supported us, continue its tender care to the end of life. Preserve us, O God, from every calamity, keep us in the path of our duty, and may we be gradually preparing for the heavenly world.

Our

OUR Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom
come: thy will be done on earth, as
it is in heaven. Give us this day our
daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against
us. And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil: for thine is
the kingdom, and the power, and the
glory, for ever. Amen.

You have now, my friends, solemnly
dedicated your child to God, and have
discharged what you thought a duty
incumbent upon you as christians.
But I hope you will not rest satisfied
with the mere external observance of
this ordinance. You have hereby per-
formed but a very small part of that
duty,

duty, which, as parents, you owe to your offspring. As it is your undoubted duty to take care of its bodily health and strength, so it is much more incumbent upon you to attend to the improvement of its mind, in piety, virtue, and useful knowledge. You will therefore, I hope, be careful to instruct this child as it grows up in the principles of piety and morality, as they are taught in the Gospel of Christ; and to make it sensible both by precept and example, of the importance of religion and virtue.

By attending to these things, you will pursue the likeliest method to promote both the present and future felicity of your child and of yourselves. Virtue and happiness, vice and misery, are, believe me, inseparably connected:
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and as the temper and disposition of children much depend on the instructions, and examples they hear and see in their tender years; so it very much depends on your treatment and conduct, whether they become useful and good men, or insignificant, disgraceful and wicked members of society. *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* And as by a proper attention to the religious education of your child, you will take the likeliest way to secure its present and future happiness; so give me leave to add, you will hereby greatly promote your own felicity. As there is certainly nothing that can give a parent such keen anguish of mind, as to see his child pursuing irregular and wicked courses, and plunging headlong
into

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into misery ; so I cannot conceive of any thing, that can yield him half so much pleasure and satisfaction, as to see his offspring steadfastly walking in the paths of religion and virtue.

I conclude with my best wishes for the success of your honest endeavours in the important work of education ; that you may be the happy parents of a virtuous offspring in this world, and that both parents and children may be the heirs of a blessed immortality.

A FORM

F O R M

OF ADMINISTERING THE

L O R D ' s S U P P E R .

St. PAUL, in his first Epistle to the CORINTHIANS, Chap. xi. Ver. 23, &c. gives the following Account of the Institution of the LORD'S SUPPER:

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

INTRODUC-

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IT is our peculiar happiness, that we live under a Religious Institution, which requires no costly offerings or laborious services, and that we serve a master, "whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light." The Christian Religion is distinguished from all others by its purity and simplicity. It is free from those superfluous rites and ceremonies, which have rendered all other systems of religion burdensome, and led men to substitute the forms and devotion, in the room of sincere piety and goodness. The principal doctrines which it teach-

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eth, are, that men ought to worship their Maker in spirit and in truth; and that the only preparation for eternal happiness, is a sober, righteous and godly life. And it requires the observance of no positive rites, but such as may be easily performed, and are adapted to answer beneficial purposes. This is particularly true, with respect to the Lord's Supper.

In performing this Christian rite, we meet together, to eat bread and drink wine in commemoration of him, whom we acknowledge to have been eminently a friend and benefactor to the human race, who spent his life in performing the most important services to mankind, and submitted to a violent and cruel death for their salvation :

LORD'S SUPPER. 259

salvation : we call to remembrance the great things which JESUS CHRIST hath done for us : we profess our respect and veneration for his memory, and our gratitude to Almighty God for having raised him up to bless mankind by turning them from their iniquities ; and we avow our subjection to his authority as a teacher sent from God, and our affection for each other as brethren. What is there, in a service of this kind, unpleasant, or irrational ?

This ordinance may, moreover, be regarded as a means of transmitting the knowledge of Christ, and a regard to his gospel, to posterity. By assembling, in this manner, to partake of bread and wine in obedience to the command of Christ, we celebrate his

merit, and call upon the rising generation to pay him that respect and reverence, which his divine authority and character demand. As the Jews, at their passover, said to their children, "This is done because of that which the Lord did for us when we came out of Egypt;" so, when we partake of the Lord's supper, we do, as it were, say to our offspring, "This is done in remembrance of the salvation which God hath wrought out for mankind by Jesus Christ, and this shall be for a memorial to you, and to your posterity for ever."

It is another consideration which proves the excellence of this Institution, that it is adapted, by its immediate influence, to produce the most beneficial

beneficial effects on men's dispositions and manners.

Whilst we call to mind the great benefits which we derive from the Christian religion, and contemplate, in imagination, the scenes of humiliation and suffering through which our blessed Saviour passed in the execution of his office, we shall be heartily disposed, to render thanks to God, for his great mercy to mankind in having sent his beloved Son into the world; and to love him, who “loved us, and gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.”

The natural consequence of these sentiments will be a more lively sense

of our obligations to the practice of virtue. For, certainly, the higher idea we entertain of our christian privileges, the more ambitious shall we be to “ walk worthy of him who hath called “ us to glory and virtue, by abounding “ in all the fruits of righteousness:” the more attentively we survey the scenes of difficulty and suffering, through which our Saviour passed in support of truth and righteousness, the more powerfully will “ his love constrain us, “ not to live to ourselves, but to him “ that died for us and rose again.”

To all this we may add, that this institution is adapted to promote brotherly love. It reminds us, at once of our relation to Christ as our common master, and to each other, as fellow

low-disciples. And it calls up to our remembrance, the most perfect example of friendship and benevolence. Whilst we are contemplating the kindness and compassion of our Saviour, nothing can be more natural than to reflect; "If Christ so loved us, we ought to love one another."

Thus rational and useful is the christian institution of the Lord's supper. Let us then, my christian brethren, attend upon it with those views and dispositions, which will render it productive of pleasure and improvement to ourselves.

P R A Y E R

BEFORE THE BREAD AND WINE
ARE ADMINISTERED.

ALMIGHTY GOD, the author of all good, who hast graciously appointed the ordinance of the Lord's supper, to keep up in our minds a continual remembrance of the kindness and compassion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the great blessings, which thou hast bestowed upon mankind through him; we humbly beseech thee to enable us, at this time, to attend upon this institution with sentiments and resolutions becoming our christian profession. Whilst we are partaking
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of this bread and wine, dispose us, to call to mind the sufferings which Jesus Christ endured for our salvation, and to "love him, who loved us and gave himself for us;" to set his excellent example before us, that we may "walk as he walked;" to meditate upon his holy precepts, resolving, with our whole hearts, to obey them; and to contemplate the promise which he hath given us of eternal life, with a steadfast purpose to prepare ourselves for a blessed immortality by a patient perseverance in well-doing. Grant, O most merciful Father, that by our attendance upon this holy ordinance, and upon all the means of religion, we may be continually improving in all the virtues of the christian character, till, at length, we shall be prepared for the enjoyment of
perfect

perfect and everlasting felicity in thy heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

During the breaking of the bread, and the pouring out of the wine, and whilst they are distributing, the following sentences, or other suitable passages of Scripture may be recited.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. He humbled himself, and became obedient

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dient even unto death, that being made perfect by suffering, he might become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive blessing and honour, and glory and power.

Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of your profession, Jesus Christ.

He was the light of the world. In him, the day spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death.

God,

God, who, at fundry times and in divers manners, spoke to the world, by prophets and wise men of old, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his well-beloved Son.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh to you in the name of the Lord.

He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from finners; he went about doing good. He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. His meat was to do the will of him that sent him. He hath left us an example, that we might follow his steps.

Let the same mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ.

He

He that faith he abideth in Christ,
ought to walk as he also walked.

He gave himself for us, an offering
and a sacrifice unto God.

We are redeemed, not with corrup-
tible things, as silver and gold, but
the precious blood of the Lamb of
God, a Lamb without blemish, and
without spot.

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
and a sheep before her shearers is dumb,
so he opened not his mouth.

There is now no condemnation to
them that are in Christ Jesus, who
walk

270 FORM FOR THE

walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acception, that Christ came into the world to save sinners.

Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: him hath God exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins.

Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.

I beseech

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I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable services. Let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your father who is in heaven.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another. See then that ye love one another with pure hearts fervently.

The grace of God, which bringeth salvation teacheth us that, denying ungodliness

godliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and piously in this present world; looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

P R A Y E R

AFTER THE BREAD AND WINE ARE
ADMINISTERED.

ALMIGHTY GOD, father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty
thanks

LORD'S SUPPER. 273

thanks for all thy goodness and loving kindness to us and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. We bless thee for his holy doctrine and perfect example; for the promise which thou hast given us in his gospel of the forgiveness of sin upon repentance and reformation; and for the glorious and blessed hope of eternal life.

Give us, we humbly beseech thee, that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we may shew forth thy praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy
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service,

service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives.

O God, who by thy Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gates of immortality; grant that we, thy servants, having this hope, may purify ourselves even as Christ our Lord was pure; that, following the example of his most holy life, we may, finally, become partakers with him in the glories of his everlasting kingdom.

We offer unto thee, O most merciful Father, our humble prayers in behalf of all our Christian brethren, beseeching thee to inspire the whole church of Christ with the spirit of holiness, peace and concord. Teach all those
who

LORD's SUPPER. 275

who are united in the path of the gospel, to shun those things which are contrary to their holy profession, and to follow all such things as are agreeable thereunto, that they may devoutly serve thee in good works, to the glory of thy holy name.

Finally, we pray unto thee, the Father of all mankind, that it may please thee to put an end to idolatry and false religion, and to grant, that the pure doctrine of Jesus Christ may be every where received, and may produce the fruits of righteousness and peace throughout the world.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as

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it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Here a PSALM may be sung.

CONCLUDING ADDRESS.

HAVING now, my Christian brethren, united to commemorate our blessed Saviour at his table, and hereby publicly professed ourselves his disciples, it only remains, that we renew our resolutions to forsake every evil way, and in all respects to behave as becomes Christians; and, that through
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the whole course of our future lives, we maintain that purity of heart, and support that usefulness of character, which alone can manifest the sincerity of our Christian profession, and entitle us to the rewards of righteousness promised in the gospel of Christ.

Let us remember the obligations which as Christians we are under, to maintain a constant government over our appetites and passions, and be sober, chaste, and temperate; to practice the strictest honesty, and exercise the most extensive charity, in our intercourse with the world; and to worship our Maker in spirit and truth, and live in obedience to all his holy commandments. And let it be our daily care, to support the credit of
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the Christian name, and to prepare ourselves for the future happiness provided for sincere Christians, by walking worthy of our holy calling, in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Now may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and may the blessing of God Almighty be upon you, and remain with you always. Amen.

T H E E N D.



